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JOHN ADAMS.

THE LIFE

OF

JOHN ADAMS.

BOSTON
PUBLISHED BY LITTLE BROWN AND COMPANY

THE

LIFE

OF

JOHN ADAMS,

SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

WITH

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY

HIS GRANDSON
CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY.
LONDON: SAMPSON LOW, SON, AND COMPANY.
1856.

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PRELIMINARY.

RESPECTING THE FAMILY OF ADAMS.

The first charter of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay was granted by Charles the First, and bears date the 4th of March, in the fourth year of his reign, 1629. It recites letters-patent of James the First, dated 3 November, in the eighteenth year of his reign, 1620, granting to the Council established at Plymouth, in the county of Devon, for the planting, ruling, ordering, and governing of New England, in America, all that part of America, from latitude 40° to 48°, and through the main lands from sea to sea. Then, that the Plymouth Council, by deed indented 19 March, 1628, conveyed to Sir Henry Rosewell, Sir John Young, knights, Thomas Southcott, John Humphrey, John Endicott, and Symon Whetcomb, their heirs and associates forever, all that part of New England, lying between three miles south of Charles, and three miles north of Merrimack rivers. Charles, therefore, at the petition of the grantees, and of others whom they had associated unto them, grants to them the same lands, and constitutes them a body *corporate politique*, in fact and name, by the name of the Governor and Companie of the Massachusetts Bay in New England.

Among the grantees of this charter is a person by the name of Thomas Adams.

Hutchinson says that the day for the annual election of officers, by charter, was the last Wednesday in Easter Term, and that on the 13th of May, 1628, Cradock was chosen governor, Goffe, deputy-governor, and eighteen assistants; of whom Thomas Adams was the twelfth.[1]

[1] *History*, vol. i. p. 9, of the London edition of 1765. Hutchinson's error is left uncorrected in the text. The year was 1629.

That on the 20th of October, 1629, a new choice of officers was made, consisting of such persons as had been resolved on the 29th of August preceding. John Winthrop was elected governor, John Humphrey, deputy-governor, and eighteen assistants; of whom Thomas Adams was the last.[1]

From this, it appears that Thomas Adams was one of those who had determined to come over with the charter. But nothing further has been found concerning him.[2]

Hutchinson says that, in 1625, one Captain Wollaston, with about thirty persons, began a plantation near Weston's, which had been abandoned; that no mention is made of a patent to Wollaston; that Morton changed the name of Mount Wollaston to Merry Mount; and that the people of Plymouth seized him, to send him to England.

Winthrop's Journal,[3] under date of 20 September, 1630, says: "Thomas Morton was adjudged to be imprisoned till he were sent into England, and his house burnt down, for his many injuries offered to the Indians, and other misdemeanors."

Winthrop's Journal, 17 September, 1639[4]: "Mount Wollaston had been formerly laid to Boston; but many poor men having lots assigned them there, and not able to use those lands and dwell still in Boston, they petitioned the town, first, to have a minister there, and, after, to have leave to gather a church there, which the town, at length, upon some small composition, gave way unto. So this day they gathered a church after the

[1] *History*, vol. i. p. 14.

[2] The records of the Massachusetts Company, whilst in London, have been printed in full since 1829, when the text was written. They show Thomas Adams an active and efficient member of the Board, contributing as largely from his private fortune to the colonization as any one; but he never himself came to America. In the preliminary chapter to the third volume of the "Collections of the American Antiquarian Society," the editor supposes this to be the same Thomas Adams who afterwards became alderman, high-sheriff, and, in 1646, Lord-Mayor of London; and who likewise shared the fortunes, good and bad, of the Presbyterian party. Assuming this to be correct, it is singular that Hutchinson should have reckoned him among those Assistants of whom he could give no account. His name frequently occurs in the records of the House of Commons, of which he was a member, and particularly in the course of their struggle with Cromwell, in 1656. He was knighted by Charles the Second for his loyalty. Fuller has placed him in his list of the Worthies of England for the same reason. This individual was born in Wem, in the county of Salop, where he founded a free school at his death, and where eulogies were pronounced on his memory.

[3] P. 20, of the edition of 1790.

[4] P. 187.

usual manner, and chose one Mr. Tompson, a very gracious, sincere man, and Mr. Flint, a godly man also, their ministers."

"There was a church gathered at the Mount, and Mr. Tompson, a very holy man, who had been an instrument of much good at Acamenticus, was ordained the pastor the 19th of the 9th month." [1]

It was in 1634 that Mount Wollaston had been laid to Boston, and Winthrop's Journal [2] says that on the 11th of December, 1634, the inhabitants of Boston met after the lecture, and chose seven men who should divide the town lands among them.

At a general court held at Newton, 3 September, 1634, it is ordered that Boston shall have enlargement at Mount Wollaston and Rumney Marsh. The bounds were settled 13 April, 1636.

"At a general court of elections, held at Boston, 13 May, 1640. The petition of the inhabitants of Mount Wollaston was voted, and granted them to be a town, according to the agreement with Boston, and the town is to be called Braintree." [3]

Thus it appears that Morton's settlement at Mount Wollaston was broken up and his house was burnt in 1630, the year in which Winthrop and his colony arrived; that in 1634 the General Court at Newton granted *enlargement* to the town of Boston at Mount Wollaston; that in 1636 grants of land were made by the inhabitants of Boston to individuals to make settlements there without removing from Boston; that many of the poor men who had lots assigned them, could not use them, and continue to reside in Boston; that they therefore petitioned Boston, first, to have a minister, and, afterwards, to gather a church, which leave was accordingly granted. They chose Mr. Tompson and Mr. Flint their ministers. Mr. Tompson was ordained the 19th of November, 1639; and on the 13th of May, 1640, they were by the court of elections made a town, by the name of Braintree.

Among the grantees of these lands was Henry Adams,[4] prob-

[1] P. 195. [2] P. 77.

[3] Hancock's *Century Sermons*, p. 21, note.

[4] In the records of the town of Boston, the following entry occurs: —

"24th day, 12th month, 1640. Granted to Henry Adams, for ten heads, forty acres, upon the same covenant of three shillings per acre."

This covenant, made about a year before, was a reserve of three shillings

ably a brother of Thomas Adams,[1] one of the grantees of the charter, and one of the Assistants chosen at the time of its transfer to this country.

By the records of the town of Braintree, it appears that this Henry Adams was buried on the 8th of October, 1646. From his will, it appears that he left a widow, five sons, named Peter, John, Joseph, Edward, and Samuel, and a daughter Ursula. He had three other sons, not mentioned in the will, whose names were Henry, Thomas, and Jonathan.[2]

Henry was the eldest son, and was the first town-clerk of

"for every acre that hath been or shall be granted to any others who are *not* inhabitants of the town of Boston."

Hence it is probable that the grantee, in this instance, had lately arrived from the mother country, and that he went at once to settle in Braintree.

[1] This conjecture does not rest upon evidence of any sort; and, if Thomas Adams was the person supposed in a former note, it is not likely to be well founded.

Genealogy was so little an object of inquiry in New England, during the latter part of the last century, that most people were content to adopt any notion respecting their descent that appeared plausible, without much examination of its soundness. One of these notions, commonly held among persons bearing the name of Adams, was, that they were all the posterity of some one individual emigrating to America during the early days of the settlement. When the distinction attained by Samuel and John, brought to public attention the fact that they had a common ancestor in Henry Adams, who came from England with eight sons, somewhere about the year 1630, and that these sons left many descendants scattered in the different towns in which they settled, this gave confirmation to the idea; and he was forthwith very generally installed as that common progenitor. But a closer investigation of early records shows that this was quite a mistake. The lists of persons admitted freemen in Massachusetts, during eighteen years from the settlement, show eight of the name, only two of whom have Christian names like those belonging to the nine members of the family of Henry. Another and a different Adams is found coming to Plymouth in the Fortune, eighteen years earlier. Still another is known to have gone to Virginia. Perhaps there were more who went to other colonies, in which the name is yet continued. Hence it is certain that no inference of consanguinity, at least on this side of the Atlantic, can be drawn from the mere fact of possessing the name in common.

In truth, the name occurs frequently in England. Mr. Lower, in the latest edition of his work on surnames, has added a list of sixty of those most common in England and Wales, as shown by the general registry of births, deaths, and marriages during the year, from July, 1837, to July, 1838. In that list the name of Adams comes in numerically as the sixtieth and last.

[2] This makes eleven heads in the family. The grant of lands is to only ten. In some accounts it has been said that one son returned to England. The fact is so stated in the inscription on the tomb of Henry Adams, which was placed there by the subject of this biography. There is no authority for it but tradition, and the secondary evidence presented by the absence of all known descendants from him who was named John. Dr. Alden makes the same statement, in his curious collection of American Epitaphs — a work in which it is much to be regretted that errors swarm so as materially to affect its value.

Braintree. The records of births, marriages, and deaths, in the first book of Braintree town records, are in his handwriting; and the first marriage recorded is his own with Elizabeth Payne, 17 October, 1643.

The second is that of Joseph Adams and Abigail Baxter, married the 26th of November, 1650. The gravestones of this Joseph Adams and of his wife are yet extant in the burial-ground of the Congregational Church at Quincy, and the inscriptions on them show that he died on the 6th of December, 1694, in the 68th year of his age. He was, therefore, born in the year 1626, in England, four years before the emigration of the Winthrop colony; and there is reason to believe that he was the youngest, and that Henry was the eldest of the sons of the first Henry, who came with him from England.

On the same book of records are entered the births of three children of Henry and Elizabeth Adams.

Eleazar, born 5 August, 1644. Jasper, born 23 June, 1647. And Elizabeth, born 11 November, 1649.

About that time, this Henry Adams removed to Medfield, of which he was also the first town-clerk, and where numerous descendants of his name are yet remaining. Among them is the distinguished female historian, Hannah Adams. He died on the 21st February, 1675, at the age of 71. He was, therefore, born in the year 1604, was 26 years of age at the time of the emigration, 36 when Braintree was made a town, and 39 when married to Elizabeth Payne.

Of the sons of the first Henry Adams, Peter and Joseph only remained settled for life at Braintree. Joseph and his wife lived together forty-two years; as the inscription on her gravestone shows that she died on the 27th of August, 1692, only two years before her husband.

Their children, as recorded upon the town book, were: —

Hannah, born 13 November, 1652. Joseph, born 24 December, 1654. John, born 15 February, 1656. Abigail, born 27 February, 1658. John and Bethiah, born 20 December, 1660. Mary, born 8 September, 1663. Samuel, born 3 September, 1665. Another Mary, born 25 February, 1667. Peter, born 7 February, 1669. Jonathan, born 31 January, 1671. Mehitable, born in 1673.

Of the original military establishment at Braintree, it appears,

from a minute on the record book, apparently made by John Mills, when he was the town-clerk, for it is professedly made from the memory of the writer — that Henry, Thomas, and Peter Adams were sergeants of companies, and John and Joseph Adams, drummers.

The inventory of the goods movable and immovable of the first Henry Adams presents a property, the sum total of which is seventy-five pounds thirteen shillings — the real and personal estate being nearly of equal value. It includes a house, barn, and ground around them. Three beds and their bedding, one of which was in *the* parlor, and two in *the* chamber. A variety of farming utensils and kitchen furniture; some store of corn, hay, and hops; one cow and a heifer, swine, and one silver spoon, and some old books. There was land which he held upon lease or temporary grant from the town; and he bequeathes the remainder of his term to his sons, Peter and John, and his daughter Ursula. He orders his books to be divided among all his children. The house and lands belonging to himself he leaves to his wife during her life or widowhood, and afterwards to his sons, Joseph and Edward, and his daughter, Ursula, charged with a payment to his son, Samuel, for land purchased of him, to be paid for in convenient time. There was a discretionary power to the wife to make use, by way of sale, of part of the land, in case of urgent need.

There is no notice in the will of the sons Henry, Thomas, or Jonathan, although they still resided at Braintree. They were, doubtless, otherwise well provided for. The will discovers a spirit of justice in the distribution, and of parental and conjugal affection. The land purchased of Samuel to be paid for in convenient time; the charge upon the children, to whom the reversion of the land is given, to pay for it; and, above all, the discretionary and contingent power to the wife to sell, are incidents truly affecting.

At the decease of this first Henry, his son, Joseph, was but twenty years of age. He lived nearly half a century after — reared, as we have seen, a numerous family of sons and daughters, and at his decease left his estate to his sons, Joseph, John,[1]

[1] Of this son, John, mentioned in the will, who removed to Boston, Samuel Adams, of the Revolution, was the grandson. So that Joseph Adams was the common ancestor of Samuel and John Adams, at three removes.

and Peter, and to his daughters, Hannah Savil, Abigail Bass, Bethiah Webb, Mary Bass, and Mehitable Adams. Four of the daughters were married before the testator's death; Mehitable shortly afterwards, 21 July, 1697, married Thomas White.

The bulk of the estate, consisting of a malt-house and brewery with lands, malting tools and vessels, was given to Peter, the youngest son, who was also made sole executor of the will.

Joseph Adams, senior, was, on the 10th of April, 1673, chosen a selectman of the town of Braintree, together with Edmund Quincy; and, in 1692–93, the same Joseph Adams was chosen surveyor of highways.

His son, Joseph Adams, junior, was born, as we have seen, 24 December, 1654. He died 12 February, 1737, at the age of 82. He had three wives.

First, Mary Chapin, 1682, by whom he had

Mary, born 6 February, 1683, married Ephraim Jones.

Abigail, born 17 February, 1684, married Seth Chapin.

She died 14 June, 1687.

His second wife was Hannah Bass, daughter of John and Ruth Bass, a daughter of John Alden.

The issue of this marriage were

Joseph, born 4 January, 1689, who was minister at Newington, New Hampshire. John, born 28 January, 1691, died 25 May, 1761. Samuel, born 28 January, 1693. Josiah, born 18 February, 1696, died 20 January, 1722. Hannah, born 23 February, 1698, married Benjamin Owen, 4 February, 1725. Ruth, born 21 March, 1700, married Nathan Webb, 23 November, 1731. Bethiah, born 13 June, 1702, married Ebenezer Hunt, 28 April, 1737. Ebenezer, born 30 December, 1704.

Hannah (Bass) Adams, died 24 October, 1705.

The third wife of Joseph Adams, junior, was Elizabeth .[1]

They had one son, Caleb, born 26 May, 1710, who died the 4th of June following.

Elizabeth survived her husband, and died February, 1739.

Joseph Adams, junior, or the second, made his will on the 23d of July, 1731.[2]

[1] Left blank in the copy. The name has not been ascertained.

[2] This is not quite accurate. A copy so dated exists, unsigned; but a later will, actually upon the record at the probate office, is dated 1 March, 1734. Its provisions vary from those here described, but not sufficiently to be material at this day.

He had given his eldest son, Joseph, the third of the name, a liberal education, that is to say, at Harvard College, where he was graduated in 1710; and considering that as equivalent to his portion of the paternal estate, he gave him, by will, only five pounds to be paid in money by his executors within one year after his decease. He distributed his estate between his sons, John, Samuel, Josiah, and Ebenezer, leaving legacies to his daughters.

Mary Jones, fifteen pounds. The three children of Abigail Chapin, of Mendon, six pounds. Hannah Owen, fifteen pounds. Ruth Adams, eighty pounds. Bethiah Adams, eighty pounds.

On the 7th of March, 1699, this Joseph Adams was chosen a selectman of Braintree, and on the 4th of March, 1700, a constable. His eldest son, Joseph Adams, on the same year that he was graduated, 1710, was chosen the schoolmaster.

The lives of the first and second Joseph Adams comprise a period of one hundred and ten years, in which are included the whole of the first century of the Massachusetts Colony, and seven years of the second. The father and son had each twelve children, of whom, besides those that died in infancy or unmarried, the elder left three sons and five daughters living at his decease; and the younger, five sons and four daughters, besides three grandchildren, offspring of a daughter who died before him. The daughters of the father and son were all reputably married, and their descendants, by the names of Savil, Bass, Webb, White, Chapin, Jones, Owen, Hunt, and numberless others, are scattered throughout every part of New England.

The inventory of the first Henry Adams displays no superfluity of wealth. He had, indeed, a house and land to bequeathe, but the house consisted of a kitchen, a parlor, and one chamber. Dr. Franklin has recorded, in the narrative of his life, the period of his prosperity, when his wife decided that it was time for him to indulge himself at his breakfast with a silver spoon; and this is the identical and only article of luxury found in the inventory of the first Henry Adams.

But he had raised a family of children, and had bred them to useful vocations and to habits of industry and frugality. His eldest son, Henry, was the first town-clerk, first of Braintree,

and then of Medfield. His sons, Thomas and Samuel, were among the first settlers of Chelmsford, and [1] of Mendon.

The brewery was probably commenced by the first Henry. It was continued by his son, Joseph, and formed the business of his life. At the age of twenty-four he married a wife of sixteen, and at his decease, after a lapse of more than forty years, left the malting establishment to his youngest son. His other children, with the exception of his youngest daughter, being all comfortably settled.

This daughter (Mehitable) was only twenty-one years of age at the time of her father's death, and by his will he provided that she should, while she remained unmarried, live in the house which he bequeathed to his son, Peter. About three years after her father's death, she married Thomas White.

The estate left by the first Joseph Adams was much more considerable than that which had been left by his father; but was still very small.[2] To his eldest son, Joseph, he bequeathed only one acre of salt meadow. Joseph had already been many years settled; had been twice married, and was father of four children at the time of his father's decease. In a country rate, made by the selectmen of the town of Braintree, on the 12th of May, 1690, Joseph Adams, senior, was assessed £1. 19. 6, and Joseph Adams, junior, £1. 4. The prosperity of the family was still increasing. And it still continued, so that this second Joseph was enabled to defray the expense of educating his eldest son, of the same name, at college. The effect of this college education, however, was to withdraw the third Joseph from the town. He became a preacher of the gospel, and was settled at Newington, in New Hampshire, for sixty-eight years, and there died in the year 1783, at ninety-three years of age.

John Adams was the second son of the second Joseph. He was born the 28th of January, 1691; so shortly before the death of his grandfather, the first Joseph, that although he had, doubtless, in childhood seen him, he could certainly have retained no remembrance of him. The lives of this John Adams and of his son, who bore his name, comprise a period of no less than one

[1] This is left blank in the original. Mendon was incorporated in 1660. It is not clear that any of the sons of the first Henry removed there, but some of their children certainly did.

[2] The inventory returns £349. 4. 0.

hundred and thirty-six years, from 1691 to 1826, including forty years of the first and within four years of the whole of the second century of the Massachusetts colony. The two Josephs, father and son, may thus be considered as representing the first century of the Massachusetts Colony, and the two Johns, father and son, of the second.

On the 31st of October, 1734, the first John Adams was married to Susanna Boylston, daughter of Peter Boylston, of Brookline. The issue of this marriage were

John Adams, born 19 October, 1735. Peter Boylston, born 16 October, 1738. Elihu, born 29 May, 1741.

John Adams, following the example of his father, gave his eldest son the benefit of an education at Harvard College; for which he was prepared, under the instruction, successively, of Mr. Joseph Marsh,[2] [the minister of the first Congregational parish of Braintree,] and of Joseph Cleverly, who was some time reader of the Episcopal Church at the same place.

The elder John Adams was many years Deacon of the first church in Braintree, and several years a selectman of the town.[1]

[1] He died on the 25th of May, 1760.

On the back of the office copy of his will is the following early memorandum, in the handwriting of his son, the subject of this memoir.

"This testator had a good education, though not at college, and was a very capable and useful man. In his early life he was an officer of militia, afterwards a deacon of the church, and a selectman of the town; almost all the business of the town being managed by him in that department for twenty years together; a man of strict piety, and great integrity; much esteemed and beloved, wherever he was known, which was not far, his sphere of life being not extensive."

The inventory of his estate returns £1330. 9. 8.

The narrative thus given in this preliminary chapter may stand for the history, not of one, but of most of the families spread over the territory of New England during the colonial period, whose hard labor and persevering, but unobtrusive virtues, made it what it is.

2. This is an error. The passage marked within brackets should be expunged. Mr Marsh was the son of the Minister, who died before John Adams was born.

CHAPTER I.

Education of Mr. Adams — School at Worcester — Choice of a Profession.

In tracing the short and simple annals of the paternal ancestors of John Adams, from their establishment here with the first settlers of the country, we have found them all in that humble, but respectable condition of life, which is favorable to the exercise of virtue, but in which they could attract little of the attention of their contemporaries, and could leave no memorial of their existence to posterity. Three long successive generations and more than a century of time passed away, during which Gray's Elegy in the country churchyard relates the whole substance of their history. They led laborious, useful, and honest lives; never elevated above the necessity of supporting themselves by the sweat of their brow, never depressed to a state of dependence or want. To that condition, John Adams himself was born; and when the first of British lyric poets wrote, —

> "Some village-Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
> The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
> Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
> Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood,"

he little imagined that there was then living, in a remote and obscure appendage of the British dominions, a boy, at the threshold of Harvard College, whose life was destined to prove the prophetic inspiration of his verse.

It is in the order of the dispensations of Providence to adapt the characters of men to the times in which they live. The grandfather of John Adams had given to the eldest of his twelve children a college education for his only inheritance. And a precious inheritance it was; it made him for nearly seventy years an instructor of religion and virtue. And such was the anticipation and the design of the father of John Adams, who,

not without some urgent advice and even solicitation, prevailed upon his son to prepare himself for college. He was there distinguished as a scholar, in a class which, in proportion to its numbers, contained as many men afterwards eminent in the civil and ecclesiastical departments, as any class that ever was graduated at that institution. Among them were William Browne, subsequently Governor of the Island of Bermuda; John Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire, before the Revolution, and afterwards Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia; David Sewall, long known as Judge of the District Court of the United States in Maine; Tristram Dalton, one of the first Senators of the United States from Massachusetts; Samuel Locke, some time President of the College; and Moses Hemmenway, who attained distinction as a divine. Adams, Hemmenway, and Locke had, even while undergraduates, the reputation of being the first scholars in the class.

In the ordinary intercourse of society, as it existed at that time in New England, the effect of a college education was to introduce a youth of the condition of John Adams into a different class of familiar acquaintance from that of his fathers. The distinction of ranks was observed with such punctilious nicety, that, in the arrangement of the members of every class, precedence was assigned to every individual according to the dignity of his birth, or to the rank of his parents. John Adams was thus placed the fourteenth in a class of twenty-four, a station for which he was probably indebted rather to the standing of his maternal family than to that of his father. This custom continued until the class which entered in 1769, and was graduated in 1773; and the substitution of the alphabetical order, in the names and places of the members of each class, may be considered as a pregnant indication of the republican principles, which were rising to an ascendency over those which had prevailed during the colonial state of the country.

> "Orders and degrees
> Jar not with liberty, but well consist."

So said the stern republican, John Milton, who, in all his works, displays a profound and anxious sense of the importance of just subordination.

Another effect of a college education was to disqualify the

receiver of it for those occupations and habits of life from which his fathers had derived their support. The tillage of the ground, and the labor of the hands in a mechanical trade, are not only unsuited to the mind of a youth whose pubescent years have been devoted to study, but the body becomes incapacitated for the toil appropriate to them. The plough, the spade, and the scythe are instruments too unwieldy for the management of men whose days have been absorbed in the study of languages, of metaphysics, and of rhetoric. The exercises of the mind and memory take place of those of the hand, and the young man issued from the college to the world, as a master of arts, finds himself destitute of all those which are accomplished by the labor of the hands. His only resources are the liberal professions — law, physic, or divinity, or that of becoming himself an instructor of youth. But the professions cannot be assumed immediately upon issuing from college. They require years of further preparatory study, for qualification to enter upon the discharge of their duties. The only employment, then, which furnishes the immediate means of subsistence for a graduate of Harvard College, is that of keeping a school.

There is nothing which so clearly marks the distinguishing character of the Puritan founders of New England as their institutions for the education of youth. It was in universities that the Reformation took its rise. Wickliffe, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and Luther, all promulgated their doctrines first from the bosom of universities. The question between the Church of Rome and all the reformers, was essentially a question between liberty and power; between submission to the dictates of other men and the free exercise of individual faculties. Universities were institutions of Christianity, the original idea of which may, perhaps, have been adopted from the schools of the Grecian sophists and philosophers, but which were essential improvements upon them. The authority of the Church of Rome is founded upon the abstract principle of power. The Reformation, in all its modifications, was founded upon the principle of liberty. Yet the Church of Rome, claiming for her children the implicit submission of faith to the decrees of her councils, and sometimes to the Bishop of Rome, as the successor of Saint Peter, is yet compelled to rest upon human reason for the foundation of faith itself. And the Protestant churches, while vindicating

the freedom of the human mind, and acknowledging the Scriptures alone as the rule of faith, still universally recur to human authority for prescribing bounds to that freedom. It was in universities only that this contentious question between liberty and power could be debated and scrutinized in all its bearings upon human agency. It enters into the profoundest recesses of metaphysical science; it mingles itself with the most important principles of morals. Now the morals and the metaphysics of the universities were formed from the school of Aristotle, the citizen of a Grecian republic, and, perhaps, the acutest intellect that ever appeared in the form of man. In that school, it was not difficult to find a syllogism competent to demolish all human authority, usurping the power to prescribe articles of religious faith, but not to erect a substitute for human authority in the mind of every individual. The principal achievement of the reformers, therefore, was to substitute one form of human authority for another; and the followers of Luther, of Calvin, of John Knox, and of Cranmer, while renouncing and denouncing the supremacy of the Romish Church and the Pope, terminated their labors in the establishment of other supremacies in its stead.

Of all the Protestant reformers, the Church of England was that which departed the least from the principles, and retained the most of the practices, of the Church of Rome. The government of the State constantly usurped to itself all the powers which it could wrest from the successor of St. Peter. The King was substituted for the Pope as head of the church, and the Parliament undertook to perform the office of the ecclesiastical councils, in regulating the faith of the people. Even to this day the British Parliament pretend to the right, and exercise the power, of prescribing to British subjects their religion; and, however unreasonable it may be, it is impossible to discard all human authority in the formation of religious belief. Faith itself, as defined by St. Paul, is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But without an express revelation from Heaven, the formation of this hope, and the belief in the existence of this evidence, come not from the internal operations of the mind, but by tradition from others, by the authority of instruction. To deny, therefore, all human authority, in matters of religion, is to assert an abstract prin-

ciple to which human practice cannot conform. Equally impracticable is it to control, by authority, the exercise of the faculties of the mind; and it is in universities, at the fountains of human knowledge, that the freedom of the mind has the most extensive range for operation. In England, the progress of the Reformation was continually entangled, not only with the affairs of the state, but with the passions and the caprices of the sovereign. When Luther first planted the standard of reformation at the University of Wittenberg, Henry the Eighth, uniting in himself the character of a dogmatist and a tyrant, published a book against him and his doctrines, from which he and all his successors have derived, from the pious gratitude of Leo the Tenth, the title of Defenders of the Faith; but when, losing his affection for his wife, he became enamoured with one of her maids of honor, he quickly learned from his angelic doctor, Thomas Aquinas, that the infallibility of the Pope could not legitimate his marriage with his brother's widow. The plunder of the monasteries furnished him with reasons equally conclusive for turning heresy into law, and an obsequious Parliament and Convocation were always at hand to give the sanction of the law to the ever versatile tenets of the king. Sensuality and rapacity were, therefore, the most effective reformers of the errors of the Church of Rome in England. After his death, and that of his short-lived son, Mary, the daughter of Catherine of Arragon, restored the papal authority in all its despotism and all its cruelty; and Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, restored again the Protestant supremacy upon the ruin of the triple tiara. The history of the Reformation in England is, therefore, the history of the lascivious and brutal passions of Henry the Eighth; of the cruel and unmerited sufferings of his wives, and of the conflicting interests, bitter prejudices, and violent tempers of his two daughters. The principles of Elizabeth were not less arbitrary than those of her father; and her successors of the house of Stuart, James, and Charles the First, continued to countenance the Reformation just so far as its establishment contributed to the support and extension of their own temporal power; and to resist, with the most inveterate and bigoted spirit of persecution, every step of further advancement to restore to its pristine purity and simplicity the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus.

But even this half-way reformation, adulterated as it was by its connection with the government of the state, and with the passions of individuals, still leaned for its support from human reason upon the learning and intellect of the schools. When Henry the Eighth had exhausted all the resources of his temporal power, and of his personal influence, in the vain attempt to prevail upon the Pope to dissolve his marriage with Catherine, his last resort for authority to dissolve it was to the opinions of the universities.

The universities, in so far as their decisions were invited, were but too well versed in the ways of the world. To the eye of reason, of justice, and of humanity, nothing could be more unjustifiable than the dissolution of the marriage of Henry the Eighth and of Catherine of Arragon. There was no consanguinity between them. They were, indeed, within the Levitical degrees of prohibition; but this was a mere positive ordinance, to which, in that same law, the case of Henry and of Catherine formed an exception, under which their marriage was not only not forbidden, but commanded. They had been married twenty years; had several children, of whom Mary was living; and, base and brutal as the conduct of Henry was, he bore ample testimony, until and after her death, to the purity and tenderness and conjugal fidelity of Catherine. They had been married by a dispensation from the Pope, who often did, and has continued until this day to grant, without question from Roman Catholics, similar dispensations for marriages, even of persons in the blood relation of uncle and niece. The dissolution of such a marriage is, therefore, revolting to every honest and every generous sentiment; yet almost all the universities decided that the marriage was unlawful, and that the offspring of it was of spurious birth. Impartial readers of history will look back to this panderism of learning to the profligacy of Henry the Eighth, when they pass judgment upon the Catholic bigotry of Mary, and upon her bloody persecution of the Protestants when she came to the throne. But the universities are not to be estimated altogether by their decisions. These are warped by temporal interests and sordid passions; but it is the studies to which they afford access that constitute their glory. The authorities of the university might be exercised and abused by the expulsion of Locke or by the application of the scourge to the person of Milton, yet

there it was that Milton and Locke drew the nutriment which made them the pride and glory of their country.

The English universities were the cradles of the New England colonies; and the Reformation was their nursing-mother. For although the successive kings and queens of England, with their sycophant Parliaments and Synods, could shape and mould the reformation of the law, according to the standard of their politics and their vices, they could not so control the march of mind in the universities. From the moment when the spell of human authority was broken, the right of private judgment resumed its functions; and when the student had been told that the only standard of faith was in the Scriptures, to prescribe creeds upon him under pains and penalties, however reasonable it might appear at White Hall, in St. Stephen's Chapel, or in Leadenhall Street, was but inconsistency, absurdity, and tyranny at Cambridge and even at Oxford.

The unavoidable consequence of the exercise of private judgment is the diversity of faith. Human nature is so constituted, that in every thing relating to religion, different minds reasoning upon the same facts come to different conclusions. This diversity furnishes to the Church of Rome one of her most powerful arguments for the necessity of a common standard, to which all Christians may resort for the regulation of their faith; and the variations of the Protestant churches were the theme upon which the eloquent Bishop of Meaux expatiated with the greatest effect in his controversial writings for the conversion of heretics.

The investigating mind, however, cannot be arrested in its career. Henry the Eighth, Edward the Sixth, Mary, Elizabeth, and James could successively issue their edicts, commanding their subjects alternately to believe or disbelieve this or that tenet of the Romish Church, to invest the Pope with infallibility, or to strip him of that attribute, and they could apply the secular arm with equal efficacy to sustain truth or error. The right of private judgment for the regulation of faith was still the corner-stone of the Reformation, and however it might be suppressed in the corrupted currents of the world, it was enjoyed and had its full operation in the universities. Among the students, who resorted to them in search of education and science, there were numbers who gave the range of free inquiry to their minds, and

who spurned the shackles of power. In the struggle between the government to arrest the progress of the Reformation, and individuals whose spirit could not be subdued, the fury of religious persecution could be satiated with nothing less than death as the punishment of non-conformity. Banishment, in other ages and for other crimes, considered as one of the severest of penalties, was an indulgence denied to the Puritans, and the first of the New England colonies was settled by fugitives from their country, who, at the peril of their lives, had escaped from the unrelenting tyranny of their native land.

The seminal principle of the New England colonies, therefore, was religious controversy; and, from this element of their constitution, different from the principle of all preceding colonies, ancient or modern, consequences followed such as the world had never before witnessed.

One of these consequences was that the founders of these colonies were men of finished education and profound learning. It was at the universities, and in the pursuit of learning, that they had imbibed the principles which they believed, by which they acted, and for which they suffered. Another consequence was, that the same founders of those colonies were men at once deeply conscientious and inflexibly firm. It was impossible that they should have adopted their principles without previous investigation, anxious and profound. The conclusions to which they came were sincere, and they believed them important beyond any thing that this world could give or take away. Every motive that could operate upon selfish passions or worldly interests pointed them to the opposite doctrines. The spirit of martyrdom alone dictated to them those which they espoused. The name of *Puritans*, given them by their oppressors in derision, was characteristic of their purposes and of their conduct. It was the object of their labors and of their aspirations to restore to its simplicity and *purity* the religion of Jesus; and they alone, of all the sectarian reformers, adapted their system of discipline and of church government to their professions. They were even in that age, and before their emigration, denominated *Independents*. Their form of church government was democratical. Any number of individuals residing in a neighborhood of each other, competent to meet together in social worship under the same roof, associated themselves by a mutual cove-

nant, and formed a church. They elected, by a majority of votes, their pastors, teachers, ruling elders, and deacons. Each church was independent of all others; and they ordained their ministers by imposition of hands of the brethren themselves. They abolished all superstitious observances, all unscriptural fasts and festivals, all symbolical idolatries; but, with a solemn and rigorous devotion of the first day of the week to the worship of God, they appropriated a small part of one weekly day to a lecture preparatory for the Sabbath, one annual day, at the approach of spring, to humiliation before their Maker, and to prayer for his blessing upon the labors of the husbandman; and one day, towards the close of the year, in grateful thanksgiving to Heaven for the blessing of the harvest and the abundance of the fields.

Among the first fruits of this love and veneration for learning was the institution of Harvard College, within the first ten years after the arrival of Governor Winthrop. And with this was soon afterwards connected another institution, not less remarkable nor less operative upon the subsequent history and character of New England. In the year 1647, an ordinance of the General Court provided as follows: "To the end that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers, in church and commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors: It is therefore ordered by this court, and authority thereof, that every township within this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their towns to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read, whose wages shall be paid, either by the parents or masters of such children or by the inhabitants in general, by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint; provided that those who send their children be not oppressed by paying much more than they can have them taught for in other towns."

"And it is further ordered that where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or householders, they shall set up a grammar-school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university; and if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year, then every such town shall pay five pounds per annum to the next such school till they shall perform this order."

This institution, requiring every town consisting of one hundred families or more, to maintain a grammar-school at which youths might be fitted for the university, was not only a direct provision for the instruction, but indirectly furnished a fund for the support of young men in penurious circumstances, immediately after having completed their collegiate career, and who became the teachers of these schools.

And thus it was that John Adams, shortly after receiving his degree of Bachelor of Arts at Harvard College, in the summer of 1755, became the teacher of the grammar-school in the town of Worcester.

He had not then completed the twentieth year of his age. Until then his paternal mansion, the house of a laboring farmer in a village of New England, and the walls of Harvard College, had formed the boundaries of his intercourse with the world. He was now introduced upon a more extensive, though still a very contracted theatre. A school of children is an epitome of the affairs and of many of the passions which agitate the bosoms of men. His situation brought him acquainted with the principal inhabitants of the place, nor could the peculiar qualities of his mind remain long altogether unnoticed among the individuals and families with whom he associated.

His condition, as the teacher of a school, was not and could not be a permanent establishment. Its emoluments gave but a bare and scanty subsistence. The engagement was but for a year. The compensation little above that of a common day-laborer. It was an expedient adopted merely to furnish a temporary supply to the most urgent wants of nature, to be purchased by the devotion of time, which would have otherwise been occupied in becoming qualified for the exercise of an active profession. To his active, vigorous, and inquisitive mind this situation was extremely irksome. But instead of suppressing, it did but stimulate its native energies. It is no slight indication of the extraordinary powers of his mind, that several original letters, written at that period of his life to his youthful acquaintance and friends, and of which he retained no copies, were preserved by the persons to whom they were written, transmitted as literary curiosities to their posterity, and, after the lapse of more than half a century, were restored to him, or appeared to his surprise in the public journals.

Of these letters, one of the earliest in date was addressed to his friend and kinsman, Nathan Webb, written on the 12th of October, 1755, while he was yet under twenty. Fifty-two years afterwards it was returned to him by the son of Mr. Webb, long after the decease of his father, and was then first published in the Boston Monthly Anthology. The following is an exact copy of the original letter yet extant.

Worcester, 12 October, 1755.

All that part of creation which lies within our observation, is liable to change. Even mighty states and kingdoms are not exempted.

If we look into history, we shall find some nations rising from contemptible beginnings, and spreading their influence till the whole globe is subjected to their sway. When they have reached the summit of grandeur, some minute and unsuspected cause commonly effects their ruin, and the empire of the world is transferred to some other place. Immortal Rome was at first but an insignificant village, inhabited only by a few abandoned ruffians; but by degrees it rose to a stupendous height, and excelled, in arts and arms, all the nations that preceded it. But the demolition of Carthage, (what one should think would have established it in supreme dominion,) by removing all danger, suffered it to sink into a debauchery, and made it at length an easy prey to barbarians.

England, immediately upon this, began to increase (the particular and minute causes of which I am not historian enough to trace) in power and magnificence, and is now the greatest nation upon the globe. Soon after the Reformation, a few people came over into this new world for conscience sake. Perhaps this apparently trivial incident may transfer the great seat of empire into America. It looks likely to me: for if we can remove the turbulent Gallicks, our people, according to the exactest computations, will in another century become more numerous than England itself. Should this be the case, since we have, I may say, all the naval stores of the nation in our hands, it will be easy to obtain the mastery of the seas; and then the united force of all Europe will not be able to subdue us. The only way to keep us from setting up for ourselves is to disunite us. *Divide et impera.* Keep us in distinct colonies,

and then, some great men in each colony desiring the monarchy of the whole, they will destroy each others' influence and keep the country *in equilibrio.*

Be not surprised that I am turned politician. This whole town is immersed in politics. The interests of nations, and all the *dira* of war, make the subject of every conversation. I sit and hear, and after having been led through a maze of sage observations, I sometimes retire, and by laying things together, form some reflections pleasing to myself. The produce of one of these reveries you have read above. Different employments and different objects may have drawn your thoughts other ways. I shall think myself happy, if in your turn you communicate your lucubrations to me.

I wrote you sometime since, and have waited with impatience for an answer, but have been disappointed.

I hope that the lady at Barnstable has not made you forget your friend. Friendship, I take it, is one of the distinguishing glories of man; and the creature that is insensible of its charms, though he may wear the shape of man, is unworthy of the character. In this, perhaps, we bear a nearer resemblance to unembodied intelligences than in any thing else. From this I expect to receive the chief happiness of my future life; and am sorry that fortune has thrown me at such a distance from those of my friends who have the highest place in my affections. But thus it is, and I must submit. But I hope ere long to return, and live in that familiarity that has from earliest infancy subsisted between yourself and affectionate friend,

JOHN ADAMS.

It is not surprising that this letter should have been preserved. Perhaps there never was written a letter more characteristic of the head and heart of its writer. Had the political part of it been written by the minister of state of a European monarchy, at the close of a long life spent in the government of nations, it would have been pronounced worthy of the united penetration and experience of a Burleigh, a Sully, or an Oxenstiern. Had the ministers who guided the destinies of Great Britain, had Chatham himself, been gifted with the intuitive foresight of distant futurity, which marks the composition of this letter, Chatham would have foreseen that his conquest of Canada in

the fields of Germany was, after all, but a shallow policy, and that divided colonies and the turbulent Gallicks were the only effectual guardians of the British empire in America.

It was the letter of an original meditative mind; a mind as yet aided only by the acquisitions then attainable at Harvard College, but formed, by nature, for statesmanship of the highest order. And the letter describes, with the utmost simplicity, the process of operation in the mind which had thus *turned politician.* The whole town was immersed in politics. It was in October of the year 1755, that year "never to be forgotten in America,"[1] the year memorable by the cruel expulsion of the neutral French from Nova Scotia, by Braddock's defeat, and by the abortive expedition under Sir William Johnson against Crown Point. For the prosecution of the war, then just commenced between France and Britain, and of which the dominion of the North American continent was to be the prize, the General Court of Massachusetts Bay, but a short month before this letter was written, had held an unprecedented extraordinary session, convened by the lieutenant-governor of the province; and, sitting every day, including the Sabbath, from the 5th to the 9th of September, had made provision for raising within the province an additional force of two thousand men. Such was the zeal of the inhabitants for the annihilation of the French power in America! The interests of nations and the *dira* of war made the subject of every conversation. The ken of the stripling schoolmaster reached far beyond the visible horizon of that day. He listened in silence to the sage observations through which he was led by the common talk of the day, and then, in his solitary reflections, looked for the revelation of the future to the history of the past; and in one bold outline exhibited by anticipation a long succession of prophetic history, the fulfilment of which is barely yet in progress, responding exactly hitherto to his foresight, but the full accomplishment of which is reserved for the development of after ages. The extinction of the power of France in America, the union of the British North American colonies, the achievement of their independence, and the establishment of their ascendency in the community of civilized nations by the means of their naval power, are all

[1] Minot's *History of Massachusetts*, vol. i. p. 259.

foreshadowed in this letter, with a clearness of perception, and a distinctness of delineation, which time has hitherto done little more than to convert into historical fact; and the American patriot can scarcely implore from the bounty of providence for his country a brighter destiny than a realization of the remainder of this prediction, as exact as that upon which time has already set his seal.

But it is not in the light only of a profound speculative politician that this letter exhibits its youthful writer. It lays open a bosom glowing with the purest and most fervid affections of friendship. A true estimate of the enjoyments of friendship is an unerring index to a feeling heart; an accurate discernment of its duties is a certain test of an enlightened mind. In the last days of his eventful life, the greatest orator, statesman, and philosopher of Rome selected this as the theme of one of those admirable philosophical dissertations, by the composition of which he solaced his sorrows for the prostration of his country's freedom, and taught to after ages lessons of virtue and happiness, which tyranny itself has never been able to extinguish. Yet that dissertation, sparkling as it is with all the brilliancy of the genius of Cicero, contains not an idea of the charms of friendship more affecting or sublime than the sentiment expressed in this letter, that friendship is that in which our nature approaches the nearest to that of the angels. Nor was this, in the heart of the writer, a barren or unfruitful plant. He was, throughout life, a disinterested, an affectionate, a faithful friend. Of this, the following narrative will exhibit more than one decisive proof.

It was his good fortune, even at that early period of life, to meet with more than one friend, of mind congenial with his own. Among them was Charles Cushing, who had been his classmate at Harvard, and Richard Cranch, a native of Kingsbridge in England, a man whose circumstances in life had made him the artificer of his own understanding as well as of his fortunes. Ten years older than John Adams, an adventurous spirit and the love of independence had brought him at the very threshold of life to the American shores, a friendless wanderer from his native land. Here, by the exercise of irreproachable industry, and by the ingenuity of a self-taught skill in mechanics, he had made for himself a useful and profitable

profession. Even before the close of his career at college, John Adams had formed the acquaintance of this excellent man; and, notwithstanding the disparity of their age, they were no sooner known to each other than they were knit together in the bands of friendship, which were severed only by death.

Immediately after he had taken his bachelor's degree, upon his contracting the engagement to keep the school at Worcester, he had promised his friend, Cranch, to write him an account of the situation of his mind. The following letter, preceding by about six weeks that to Mr. Webb, already given, and remarkable as the earliest production of his pen known to be extant,[1] is the performance of that promise.

Worcester, 2 September, 1755.

Dear Sir, — I promised to write you an account of the situation of my mind. The natural strength of my faculties is quite insufficient for the task. Attend, therefore, to the invocation. O thou goddess, muse, or whatever is thy name, who inspired immortal Milton's pen with a confusion ten thousand times confounded, when describing Satan's voyage through chaos, help me, in the same cragged strains, to sing things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme. When the nimble hours have tackled Apollo's coursers, and the gay deity mounts the eastern sky, the gloomy pedagogue arises, frowning and lowering like a black cloud begrimed with uncommon wrath, to blast a devoted land. When the destined time arrives, he enters upon action, and, as a haughty monarch ascends his throne, the pedagogue mounts his awful *great chair*, and dispenses right and justice through his whole empire. His obsequious subjects execute the imperial mandates with cheerfulness, and think it their high happiness to be employed in the service of the emperor. Sometimes paper, sometimes his penknife, now birch, now arithmetic, now a ferule, then A B C, then scolding, then flattering, then thwacking, calls for the pedagogue's attention. At length, his spirits all exhausted, down comes pedagogue from his throne, and walks out in awful solemnity, through a cringing multi-

[1] This is a mistake; for a letter to Nathan Webb, written the day before, has been found among the papers. It is remarkable only as showing the first traces of the objections to "the frigid John Calvin," which deterred Mr. Adams from embracing the clerical profession, and thus decided his whole career.

tude. In the afternoon, he passes through the same dreadful scenes, smokes his pipe, and goes to bed. Exit muse.

The situation of the town is quite pleasant, and the inhabitants, as far as I have had opportunity to know their character, are a sociable, generous, and hospitable people; but the school is indeed a school of affliction. A large number of little runtlings, just capable of lisping A B C, and troubling the master. But Dr. Savil tells me, for my comfort, "by cultivating and pruning these tender plants in the garden of Worcester, I shall make some of them plants of renown and cedars of Lebanon." However this be, I am certain that keeping this school any length of time, would make a base weed and ignoble shrub of me.

Pray write me the first time you are at leisure. A letter from you, Sir, would balance the inquietude of school-keeping. Dr. Savil will packet it with his, and convey it to me.

When you see friend Quincy, conjure him, by all the muses, to write me a letter. Tell him that all the conversation I have had since I left Braintree, is dry disputes upon politics, and rural obscene wit. That, therefore, a letter written with that elegance of style and delicacy of humor which characterize all his performances, would come recommended with the additional charm of rarity, and contribute more than any thing (except one from you) towards making a happy being of me once more. To tell you a secret, I don't know how to conclude neatly without invoking assistance; but as truth has a higher place in your esteem than any ingenious conceit, I shall please you, as well as myself most, by subscribing myself your affectionate friend, JOHN ADAMS.

The letter is a picture of the situation of the writer's mind. And the first thing that occurs in it to observation, is the *uneasiness* of that situation. It is easy to perceive in it the fire of ambition, which had been kindled at the torch of science. The occupation of a schoolmaster could not satisfy his aspirations. Its authority excited in him sentiments, which could be described only in the strains of the mock heroic. His friend, Dr. Savil, for his encouragement, had held up to him the possible chances of future eminence which some of his pupils might obtain from his teaching; but the prospect was too contingent

and too remote. The school was a school of affliction, and he dreaded the probable effect of a long continuance in it upon himself. To the situation of the town, and to the character and deportment of the inhabitants, he does ample justice; but neither the employment in which he was engaged nor the conversation of those with whom he associated could fill the capacities of his soul. To the ardent and meditative mind of a youth fresh from the college, there was doubtless something undefined to itself in the compass of its desires; but politics and obscenity, the ordinary range of conversation for vulgar minds, even in the highest condition of life,[1] had no attractions for him. From the void left aching at the heart, after such social intercourse, he reverted to the charm of correspondence with friends like Cranch and Quincy — to elegance of style and delicacy of humor, for the restoration of his happiness.

At this time, however, he had not begun to deliberate upon the choice of a profession. The letter to Nathan Webb, so soon afterwards written, does, indeed, sufficiently foreshow that the cure of souls in a parish church was as little adapted to the faculties and propensities of the writer as the keeping of the town school at Worcester; but several months more passed away before he began to deliberate with himself upon his essential qualifications for the pastoral office.

On the 1st of April, 1756, in answer to a letter from his friend and classmate, Charles Cushing, who had advised him to pursue the clerical profession, he writes thus.

"My Friend, — I had the pleasure, a few days since, of receiving your favor of February 4th. I am obliged to you for your advice, and for the manly and rational reflections with which you enforced it. I think I have deliberately weighed the subject, and had almost determined as you advise. Upon the stage of life, we have each of us a part, a laborious and difficult part to act; but we are all capable of acting our parts, however difficult, to the best advantage. Upon common theatres, indeed, the applause of the audience is of more importance to the actors than their own approbation. But upon the stage of

[1] See Johnson's *Life of Savage*, and the remark of this eccentric genius, upon Sir Robert Walpole.

life, while conscience claps, let the world hiss. On the contrary, if conscience disapproves, the loudest applauses of the world are of little value. While our own minds commend, we may calmly despise all the frowns, all censure, all the malignity of man.

> "Should the whole frame of nature round us break,
> In ruin and confusion hurled;
> We, unconcerned, might hear the mighty crack,
> And stand unhurt amidst a falling world."

We have, indeed, the liberty of choosing what character we shall sustain in this great and important drama. But to choose rightly, we should consider in what character we can do the most service to our fellow-men as well as to ourselves. The man who lives wholly to himself is of less worth than the cattle in his barn."

The letter then proceeds to present a parallel between the three learned professions, as objects of selection for a young man at his entrance upon active life, and with reference to the principles thus laid down, that is, to the means afforded respectively by them, for support, independence, and for usefulness to others. From this survey of the professions, he draws the following somewhat dubious conclusion.

"Upon the whole, I think the divine (if he reveres his own understanding more than the decrees of councils or the sentiments of fathers; if he resolutely discharges the duties of his station according to the dictates of his mind; if he spends his time in the improvement of his head in knowledge and his heart in virtue, instead of sauntering about the streets;) will be able to do more good to his fellow-men, and make better provision for his own future happiness in this profession than in another. However, I am as yet very contented in the place of a schoolmaster. I shall not, therefore, very suddenly become a preacher."

This conclusion shows that the state of his mind was yet unsettled upon the question then so deeply interesting to him. The parallel between the comparative eligibility of the professions was very imperfect. It wanted the basis of experience for facts upon which reason and judgment could operate. But the same question occurs from year to year to a multitude of youths issuing from the colleges of the country. The three

professions may justly be considered as all equally necessary to the comfort and welfare of society. They are all equally honorable; nor can the palm of usefulness justly be awarded to either of them in preference to the other. All afford ample fields for the exercise of every talent and of every virtue that exalts or adorns the human character. To the ambition of taking part in public affairs, the law is the profession which affords the greatest facilities. But for the acquisition of eminence in it, the talent of extemporaneous public speaking is indispensable, and that talent is of rare endowment. It requires a conformation of physical organs and of intellectual powers of peculiar character, the foundation of which is the gift of nature, and without which the profoundest intellect and the most inventive imagination are alike unfitted for the conflicts of the bar, or of deliberative assemblies. In the choice of a profession, therefore, the youth advancing upon the threshold of life, while keeping his eye steadily fixed upon the fundamental principle laid down in this letter, and considering in what character he can do the most service to his fellow-men as well as to himself, should undergo a rigorous process of self-examination; should learn to estimate his own powers, and determine how far they will bear him out in the indulgence of his own inclinations.

For the profession of the law, John Adams had been preeminently gifted with the endowments of nature; a sound constitution of body, a clear and sonorous voice, a quick conception, a discriminating judgment, and a ready elocution. His natural temper was as quick as his conception. His confidence in his own judgment, founded on the consciousness of his powers, gave it a cast of stubbornness and inflexibility, perhaps necessary for the successful exercise of the duties of a lawyer, nor sometimes less necessary, though requiring more frequently the countercheck of self-control, in the halls of legislation and at the courts of kings. A deeply conscientious moral sense, combining with an open disposition, averse to all disguise or concealment, and with that quickness of temper, produced in after life an occasional irritability which he was not always able to suppress. A more imperturbable equanimity might have been better adapted to the controversies of his subsequent political life, to the cool and crafty profligacy of simulated friends

and insidious rivals. But even the vehemence of virtuous indignation is sometimes useful in establishing the character and reputation of a young man rising to eminence at the bar without adventitious aid, and upon the solitary energy of his own faculties.

At the close of the above letter to Charles Cushing, there was the following short, but significant postscript: —

"P. S. There is a story about town that I am an Arminian."

These few words afford the key to that change in his predilections and prospects which shortly afterwards brought him to the final determination of intrusting his future fortunes to the profession of the law. From the 18th of November, 1755, he had kept an occasional diary; in which, under the date of Sunday, the 22d of August, 1756, is the following entry.

"Yesterday I completed a contract with Mr. Putnam to study law under his inspection for two years. I ought to begin with a resolution to oblige and please him and his lady in a particular manner. I ought to endeavor to oblige and please everybody, but them in particular. Necessity drove me to this determination, but my inclination, I think, was to preach. However, that would not do. But I set out with firm resolutions, I think, never to commit any meanness or injustice in the practice of law. The study and practice of law, I am sure, does not dissolve the obligations of morality or of religion. And although the reason of my quitting divinity was my opinion concerning some disputed points, I hope I shall not give reason of offence to any in that profession by imprudent warmth."[1]

In letters to his friends, Cranch and Charles Cushing, of 29th August and of 18th and 19th October, 1756, he speaks more explicitly. To the first, within a week after having completed his contract with Mr. Putnam, he writes: —

My Friend, — I am set down with a design of writing to you. But the narrow sphere I move in, and the lonely, unsociable life I lead, can furnish a letter with little more than complaints of my hard fortune. I am condemned to keep school two years longer. This I sometimes consider as a very grievous calamity, and almost sink under the weight of woe. But shall

[1] Vol. ii. p. 30.

I dare to complain and to murmur against Providence for this little punishment, when my very existence, all the pleasure I enjoy now, and all the advantages I have of preparing for hereafter, are expressions of benevolence that I never did and never could deserve? Shall I censure the conduct of that Being who has poured around me a great profusion of those good things that I really want, because He has kept from me other things that might be improper and fatal to me if I had them? That Being has furnished my body with several senses, and the world around it with objects suitable to gratify them. He has made me an erect figure, and has placed in the most advantageous part of my body the sense of sight. And He has hung up in the heavens over my head, and spread out in the fields of nature around me, those glorious shows and appearances with which my eyes and my imagination are extremely delighted. I am pleased with the beautiful appearance of the flower, and still more pleased with the prospect of forests and of meadows, of verdant fields and mountains covered with flocks; but I am thrown into a kind of transport when I behold the amazing concave of heaven, sprinkled and glittering with stars. That Being has bestowed upon some of the vegetable species a fragrance that can almost as agreeably entertain our sense of smell. He has so wonderfully constituted the air we live in, that, by giving it a particular kind of vibration, it produces in us as intense sensations of pleasure as the organs of our bodies can bear, in all the varieties of harmony and concord. But all the provision that He has made for the gratification of my senses, though very engaging instances of kindness, are much inferior to the provision for the gratification of my nobler powers of intelligence and reason. He has given me reason, to find out the truth and the real design of my existence here, and has made all endeavors to promote that design agreeable to my mind, and attended with a conscious pleasure and complacency. On the contrary, He has made a different course of life, a course of impiety and injustice, of malevolence and intemperance, appear shocking and deformed to my first reflection. He has made my mind capable of receiving an infinite variety of ideas, from those numerous material objects with which we are environed; and of retaining, compounding, and arranging the vigorous impressions which we receive from these into all the

varieties of picture and of figure. By inquiring into the situation, produce, manufactures, &c., of our own, and by travelling into or reading about other countries, I can gain distinct ideas of almost every thing upon this earth at present; and by looking into history, I can settle in my mind a clear and a comprehensive view of the earth at its creation, of its various changes and revolutions, of its progressive improvement, sudden depopulation by a deluge, and its gradual repeopling; of the growth of several kingdoms and empires, of their wealth and commerce, their wars and politics; of the characters of their principal leading men; of their grandeur and power; their virtues and vices; of their insensible decays at first, and of their swift destruction at last. In fine, we can attend the earth from its nativity, through all the various turns of fortune; through all its successive changes; through all the events that happen on its surface, and all the successive generations of mankind, to the final conflagration, when the whole earth, with its appendages, shall be consumed by the furious element of fire. And after our minds are furnished with this ample store of ideas, far from feeling burdened or overloaded, our thoughts are more free and active and clear than before, and we are capable of spreading our acquaintance with things much further. Far from being satiated with knowledge, our curiosity is only improved and increased; our thoughts rove beyond the visible diurnal sphere, range through the immeasurable regions of the universe, and lose themselves among a labyrinth of worlds. And not contented with knowing what is, they run forward into futurity, and search for new employment there. There they can never stop. The wide, the boundless prospect lies before them! Here alone they find objects adequate to their desires. Shall I now presume to complain of my hard fate, when such ample provision has been made to gratify all my senses, and all the faculties of my soul? God forbid. I am happy, and I will remain so, while health is indulged to me, in spite of all the other adverse circumstances that fortune can place me in.

I expect to be joked upon, for writing in this serious manner, when it shall be known what a resolution I have lately taken. I have engaged with Mr. Putnam to study law with him two years, and to keep the school at the same time. It will be hard work; but the more difficult and dangerous the enterprise, a

brighter crown of laurel is bestowed on the conqueror. However, I am not without apprehensions concerning the success of this resolution, but I am under much fewer apprehensions than I was when I thought of preaching. The frightful engines of ecclesiastical councils, of diabolical malice and Calvinistical good-nature never failed to terrify me exceedingly whenever I thought of preaching. But the point is now determined, and I shall have liberty to think for myself without molesting others or being molested myself. Write to me the first good opportunity, and tell me freely whether you approve my conduct.

Please to present my tenderest regards to our two friends at Boston, and suffer me to subscribe myself your sincere friend,

JOHN ADAMS.

Some of the thoughts in the first part of this letter had, apparently, been suggested by the papers of Addison in the "Spectator" upon the pleasures of the imagination. The additions discover a mind grasping at universal knowledge, and considering the pursuit of science as constituting the elements of human happiness. These letters are given entire; for although no copy of them was retained by their writer, yet nothing written by him in after life bears more strongly the impress of his intellectual powers, and none set forth with equal clearness the principles to which he adhered to his last hour. He will hereafter be seen in the characters of a lawyer, patriot, statesman, founder of a mighty empire, upon the great and dazzling theatre of human affairs. In these letters, and in the journals of that period in which they were written, we behold him, a solitary youth, struggling with the "*res angusta domi*," against which it has, in all ages, proved so difficult to emerge; his means of present subsistence depending solely upon his acquisitions at college and upon his temporary contract for keeping school; his prospects of futurity, dark and uncertain; his choice of a profession different from that which his father had intended, and from that to which he had been led by his own inclinations and by the advice of his friends.

This profession, besides, then labored under the disadvantage of invcterate prejudices operating against it in the minds of the people of his native country. Among the original settlers of New England there were no lawyers. There could, indeed,

be no field for the exercise of that profession at the first settlement of the colonies. The general court itself was the highest court of judicature in the colony, for which reason no practising lawyer was permitted to hold a seat in it.[1] Under the charter of William and Mary, the judicial was first separated from the legislative power, and a superior court of judicature was established in 1692, from whose decisions in all cases exceeding three hundred pounds sterling there was an appeal to the king in council. Under this system, it was not possible that the practice of the bar should either form or lead to great eminence. Hutchinson says he does not recollect that the town of Boston ever chose a lawyer to represent it under the second charter, until the year 1738, when Mr. John Read was chosen, but was left out the next year; and in 1758 and '59 Mr. Benjamin Pratt was member for the town. From that time, he observes, that lawyers had taken the lead in all the colonies, as well as afterwards in the continental congress.

The controversies which terminated in the war and revolution of independence were all upon points of law. Of such controversies lawyers must necessarily be the principal champions; but at the time when John Adams resolved to assume the profession of the law, no such questions existed; and the spirit of prophecy itself could scarcely have foreseen them. A general impression that the law afforded a wider range for the exercise of the faculties of which he could not be unconscious, than the ministry, and still more, a dread and horror of Calvinistical persecution, finally fixed his determination.

But in taking a step of so much importance and hazard, he was extremely anxious to obtain the approbation of his friends. On the 19th of October, 1756, he wrote thus to Charles Cushing.

Worcester, 19 October, 1756.

My Friend, — I look upon myself obliged to give you the reasons that induced me to resolve upon the study and profession of the law, because you were so kind as to advise me to a different profession. When yours came to hand, I had thoughts of preaching, but the longer I lived and the more experience I had of that order of men, and of the real design of that insti-

[1] Hutchinson's *History*, vol. iii. p. 104.

tution, the more objections I found in my own mind to that course of life. I have the pleasure to be acquainted with a young gentleman of a fine genius, cultivated with indefatigable study, of a generous and noble disposition, and of the strictest virtue; a gentleman who deserves the countenance of the greatest men, and the charge of the best parish in the province. But with all these accomplishments, he is despised by some, ridiculed by others, and detested by more, only because he is suspected of Arminianism. And I have the pain to know more than one, who has a sleepy, stupid soul, who has spent more of his waking hours in darning his stockings, smoking his pipe, or playing with his fingers, than in reading, conversation, or reflection, cried up as promising young men, pious and orthodox youths, and admirable preachers. As far as I can observe, people are not disposed to inquire for piety, integrity, good sense, or learning, in a young preacher, but for stupidity (for so I must call the pretended sanctity of some absolute dunces), irresistible grace, and original sin. I have not, in one expression, exceeded the limits of truth, though you think I am warm. Could you advise me, then, who you know have not the highest opinion of what is called orthodoxy, to engage in a profession like this?

But I have other reasons too numerous to explain fully. This you will think is enough. . . .

The students in the law are very numerous, and some of them youths of which no country, no age, would need to be ashamed. And if I can gain the honor of treading in the rear, and silently admiring the noble air and gallant achievements of the foremost rank, I shall think myself worthy of a louder triumph than if I had headed the whole army of orthodox preachers.

The difficulties and discouragements I am under are a full match for all the resolution I am master of. But I comfort myself with this consideration — the more danger the greater glory. The general, who at the head of a small army encounters a more numerous and formidable enemy, is applauded, if he strove for the victory and made a skilful retreat, although his army is routed and a considerable extent of territory lost. But if he gains a small advantage over the enemy, he saves the interest of his country, and returns amidst the acclamations of

the people, bearing the triumphal laurel to the capitol. (I am in a very bellicose temper of mind to-night; all my figures are taken from war.)

I have cast myself wholly upon fortune. What her ladyship will be pleased to do with me, I can't say. But wherever she shall lead me, or whatever she shall do with me, she cannot abate the sincerity with which I trust I shall always be your friend, JOHN ADAMS.[1]

The day before the date of this letter, he had written to Mr. Cranch one of similar import, repeating the request for his opinion upon the determination he had taken. It is remarkable that his purpose was not approved by either of the friends whom he consulted. They thought his undertaking inconsiderate and rash; and Mr. Cranch, in a subsequent answer to his inquiries, advised him to reconsider his resolution, and devote his life to the profession of a divine.

But his lot was cast, and he persevered. For the two succeeding years, six hours of every day were absorbed in his laborious occupation of a schoolmaster, while the leisure left him in the remnants of his time was employed in the study of the law.

In the interval between the dates of his two letters to Charles Cushing, on the choice of a profession, some extracts from his

[1] These letters to Charles Cushing had lain for more than half a century, forgotten by their author, when, in the year 1817, they suddenly appeared in print in a Nantucket newspaper. The son of Mr. Cushing immediately sent to Mr. Adams an explanation and apology for this act, which elicited from him the following note.

Quincy, 13 March, 1817.

Though the publication of my juvenile letters to your father, especially in a Nantucket gazette, is a riddle, a mystery beyond all comprehension, yet as it was impossible for me to suspect any unkindness in your family, the friendly apology in your letter of the 11th of this month was unnecessary, though highly gratifying to me. The letters, while they have afforded some amusement to my friends, have excited many tender recollections as well as serious reflections in me. I was like a boy in a country fair, in a wilderness, in a strange country, with half a dozen roads before him, groping in a dark night to find which he ought to take. Had I been obliged to tell your father the whole truth, I should have mentioned several other pursuits. Farming, merchandise, law, and above all, war. Nothing but want of interest and patronage prevented me from enlisting in the army. Could I have obtained a troop of horse or a company of foot, I should infallibly have been a soldier. It is a problem in my mind, to this day, whether I should have been a coward or a hero.

diary may indicate the progress of his mind towards the conclusion at which it arrived. Soon after he left college, he adopted the practice of entering in a commonplace book extracts from his readings. This volume commences with the well known verses of Pythagoras: —

> Μηδ' ὕπνον μαλακοῖσιν ἐπ' ὄμμασι προσδέξασθαι,
> Πρὶν τῶν ἡμερινῶν ἔργων τρὶς ἕκαστον ἐπελθεῖν·
> Πῇ παρέβην; Τί δ' ἔρεξα; Τί μοι δέον οὐκ ἐτελέσθη;

These verses appear to have suggested to him the idea of keeping a diary; the method best adapted to insure to the Pythagorean precept practical and useful effect. It was kept irregularly, at broken intervals, and was continued through the whole active period of his life. Not, however, as a daily journal, nor as a record of the incidents of his own life. It was kept on separate and loose sheets of paper, of various forms and sizes, and between which there was no intentional chain of connection. In this diary, together with notices of the trivial incidents of his daily life, the state of the weather, the attendance upon his school, the houses at which he visited, and the individuals with whom he associated, are contained his occasional observations upon men and things, and the reflections of his mind, occasioned whether by the conversations which occurred in his intercourse with society, or by the books which he read. The predominating sentiment in his mind was the consciousness of his own situation, and the contemplation of his future prospects in life.

> "The world was all before him, where to choose
> His place,"

and the considerations upon which he was bound to fix his choice were long and often revolved before they ripened into their final determination.

His disgust at the doctrines of Calvinism was perhaps riveted by the opinions which he found disseminated in the social circle into which he had been introduced. The Calvinistic doctrines of election, reprobation, and the atonement are so repulsive to human reason that they can never obtain the assent of the mind, but through the medium of the passions; and the master passion of orthodoxy is *fear*. Calvinism has no other agent. The terrors of eternal damnation are the only propagators of

the faith; and when they prove inefficacious, the Calvinist kindles the fagot upon earth to their aid. Extremes are apt to produce each other. The tyranny over the conscience exercised by the Calvinistic preachers necessarily produced a reaction. From the close of the first quarter of the eighteenth century to the end of the century itself, there appeared in every part of Europe, but especially in the English and French languages, a series of writers of preëminent ability, the principal object of whose labors was to deny all religion, and above all, Christianity. Of these writers, Bolingbroke took the lead in England. Voltaire succeeded him in France. Hume, and Gibbon, and Thomas Paine, successively followed in the British Islands; Diderot, D'Alembert, and Helvetius in France. These were the most popular writers of the age; and some of the most powerful of their attacks were made near the middle of the century. The same period was equally remarkable both in France and England for an unexampled degeneracy of manners and looseness of morals. This had followed in France immediately after the bigotry and persecution of the caducity of Louis the Fourteenth, and the first example of open profligacy was set by his immediate successor, the regent Duke of Orleans. Louis the Fifteenth, who followed, lived through a reign of upwards of half a century of the most abandoned licentiousness, for which his only atonement was dictated by a returning sense of religion, upon the bed of death. Something more, at least of the appearances of decency, had been preserved in England; where the corruptions of the age were, if not less dissolute, at least less ostentatious.

The bigoted and gloomy doctrines of Calvinism, though deeply rooted in the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, had been gradually eradicated from the actual creed of her hierarchy. They still burrowed, however, in most of the dissenting churches of New England, and it was their domineering and persecuting spirit which drove John Adams from the profession of divinity to that of the law. The literature of Great Britain was more thoroughly naturalized in the New England colonies than her government or her church establishment. The writings of the freethinkers had made their way across the Atlantic, and, while contributing to dissolve the spell of Calvinism, had not been altogether inefficacious in disseminating the errors of infidelity.

The posthumous philosophical works of Bolingbroke, posthumous because he had not dared to publish them in his own lifetime, were published by David Mallet, shortly before Mr. Adams's residence at Worcester,[1] and he found them in the library of Mr. Putnam. Many of the individuals with whom he associated were infected with the prevailing infidelity of the times, but it never reached him. He read the writings of Bolingbroke with the spirit of candid criticism; and, admiring their style, many years afterwards repeated the perusal of them. His copy of the philosophical writings is filled with marginal manuscript annotations, amply sufficient to preserve any reader of that copy from the influence of the fascinating errors with which they abound.

In a fragment of autobiography left by Mr. Adams, he gives the following account of his own opinions and feelings during this early period.

"Between the years 1751, when I entered, and 1754, when I left college, a controversy was carried on between Mr. Bryant, the minister of our parish, and some of his people, partly on account of his principles, which were called Arminian, and partly on account of his conduct, which was too gay and light, if not immoral. Ecclesiastical councils were called, and sat at my father's house. Parties and their acrimonies arose in the church and congregation, and controversies from the press between Mr. Bryant, Mr. Niles, Mr. Porter, Mr. Bass, concerning the five points. I read all these pamphlets and many other writings on the same subjects, and found myself involved in difficulties beyond my powers of decision. At the same time, I saw such a spirit of dogmatism and bigotry in clergy and laity, that, if I should be a priest, I must take my side, and pronounce as positively as any of them, or never get a parish, or getting it must soon leave it. Very strong doubts arose in my mind, whether I was made for a pulpit in such times, and

[1] The same sad morn to church and state
(So for our sins 't was fixed by fate)
A double stroke was given;
Black as the whirlwind of the North,
St. John's fell genius issu'd forth
And Pelham fled to heav'n!

Garrick's *Ode on the Death of Mr. Pelham.* Dodsley's *Collection of Poems*, vol. iv. p. 198.

I began to think of other professions. I perceived very clearly, as I thought, that the study of theology, and the pursuit of it as a profession, would involve me in endless altercations, and make my life miserable, without any prospect of doing any good to my fellow-men.

"The last two years of my residence at college produced a club of students (I never knew the history of the first rise of it) who invited me to become one of them. Their plan was to spend their evenings together in reading any new publications, or any poetry or dramatic compositions that might fall in their way. I was as often requested to read as any other, especially tragedies, and it was whispered to me and circulated among others that I had some faculty for public speaking, and that I should make a better lawyer than divine. This last idea was easily understood and embraced by me. My inclination was soon fixed upon the law. But my judgment was not so easily determined. There were many difficulties in the way. Although my father's general expectation was that I should be a divine, I knew him to be a man of so thoughtful and considerate turn of mind, to be possessed of so much candor and moderation, that it would not be difficult to remove any objections he might make to my pursuit of physic or law, or any other reasonable course. My mother, although a pious woman, I knew had no partiality for the life of a clergyman. But I had uncles and other relations, full of the most illiberal prejudices against the law. I had, indeed, a proper affection and veneration for them, but as I was under no obligation of gratitude to them, which could give them any color of authority to prescribe a course of life to me, I thought little of their opinions. Other obstacles more serious than these presented themselves. A lawyer must have a fee for taking me into his office. I must be boarded and clothed for several years. I had no money; and my father, having three sons, had done as much for me, in the expenses of my education, as his estate and circumstances could justify, and as my reason or my honor would allow me to ask. I therefore gave out that I would take a school, and took my degree at college undetermined whether I should study divinity, law, or physic.

"In the public exercises at commencement, I was somewhat remarked as a respondent, and Mr. Maccarty of Worcester, who

was empowered by the selectmen of that town to procure them a Latin master for their grammar-school, engaged me to undertake it. About three weeks after commencement, in 1755, when I was not yet twenty years of age, a horse was sent me from Worcester, and a man to attend me. We made the journey, about sixty miles, in one day, and I entered on my office. For three months I boarded with one Green, at the expense of the town, and by the arrangement of the selectmen. Here I found Morgan's 'Moral Philosopher,' which I was informed had circulated with some freedom in that town, and that the principles of deism had made a considerable progress among several persons, in that and other towns in the county. Three months after this, the selectmen procured lodgings for me at Dr. Nahum Willard's. This physician had a large practice, a good reputation for skill, and a pretty library. Here were Dr. Cheyne's works, Sydenham and others, and Van Swieten's Commentaries on Boerhaave. I read a good deal in these books, and entertained many thoughts of becoming a physician and a surgeon. But the law attracted my attention more and more; and, attending the courts of justice, where I heard Worthington, Hawley, Trowbridge, Putnam, and others, I felt myself irresistibly impelled to make some effort to accomplish my wishes. I made a visit to Mr. Putnam, and offered myself to him. He received me with politeness, and even kindness, took a few days to consider of it, and then informed me that Mrs. Putnam had consented that I should board in his house, that I should pay no more than the town allowed for my lodgings, and that I should pay him a hundred dollars when I should find it convenient. I agreed to his proposals without hesitation, and immediately took possession of his office. His library, at that time, was not large; but he had all the most essential law books. Immediately after I entered with him, however, he sent to England for a handsome addition of law books, and for Lord Bacon's works. I carried with me to Worcester, Lord Bolingbroke's 'Study and Use of History' and his 'Patriot King.' These I had lent him, and he was so well pleased with them that he added Bolingbroke's works to his list, which gave me an opportunity of reading the posthumous works of that writer, in five volumes. Mr. Burke once asked, who ever read him through? I can answer that I read him through before the year 1758, and

that I have read him through at least twice since that time. But, I confess, without much good or harm. His ideas of the English constitution are correct, and his political writings are worth something; but, in a great part of them, there is more of faction than of truth. His religion is a pompous folly; and his abuse of the Christian religion is as superficial as it is impious. His style is original and inimitable; it resembles more the oratory of the ancients than any writings or speeches I ever read in English."

In October, 1758, terminated the period of his keeping school at Worcester, and of his law studies under the direction of Mr. Putnam. He was sworn as an attorney in the superior court at the recommendation of Jeremy Gridley, then attorney-general of the Province, and one of the most eminent lawyers and scholars of the time. By some accident it had happened that Mr. Putnam neglected to give him, on his departure, the usual certificate and recommendation to the court. He went, therefore, and introduced himself, in person, to Mr. Gridley, who, upon conversing with him, conceived a very high opinion of his acquisitions, and besides presenting him with a very favorable commendation to the court, treated him with a kindness and courtesy which produced a deep and indelible impression upon his mind and heart. Mr. Gridley counselled him as a brother, with regard to the practice of the profession, and advised him as a parent with regard to his conduct in life.[1]

[1] See the *Diary*, vol. ii. pp. 45–50.

CHAPTER II.

Study and Practice of the Law until March, 1770.

From the time of the admission of Mr. Adams to the bar, he resided at his father's house, in Braintree; and, after the decease of his father, which happened on the 25th of May, 1761, he remained with his mother, until his marriage, in 1764. The earlier part of this time was a period of intense anxiety to him with regard to his prospects in life. An obscure village of New England, in a family alike unknown to fortune and to fame, was a scene little adapted to promote his advancement in either. In the following extracts from his journal, the reader will find an exposition of the thoughts which occupied his leisure; of the studies that he pursued; of his constant observation upon men and manners within the contracted circle of acquaintance with whom he habitually associated, and of that severe and rigorous self-examination and censure to which he had accustomed himself, and in which he reduced to effective practice the precept of Pythagoras.

"Æt. xxiii. 1759. The other night, the choice of Hercules came into my mind, and left impressions there which I hope will never be effaced, nor long unheeded. I thought of writing a fable on the same plan, but accommodated, by omitting some circumstances and inserting others, to my own case. Let virtue address me.

"Which, dear youth, will you prefer, a life of effeminacy, indolence, and obscurity, or a life of industry, temperance, and honor? Take my advice; rise and mount your horse by the morning's dawn, and shake away, amidst the great and beautiful scenes of nature that appear at that time of the day, all the crudities that are left in your stomach, and all the obstructions that are left in your brains. Then return to your studies, and bend your whole soul to the institutes of the law and the

reports of cases that have been adjusted by the rules in the institutes. Let no trifling diversion, or amusement, or company, decoy you from your books; *i. e.* no girl, no gun, no cards, no flutes, no violins, no dress, no tobacco, no laziness.[1]

"Labor to get distinct ideas of law, right, wrong, justice, equity; search for them in your own mind, in Roman, Grecian, French, English treatises of natural, civil, common, statute law. Aim at an exact knowledge of the nature, end, and means of government. Compare the different forms of it with each other, and each of them with their effects on public and private happiness. Study Seneca, Cicero, and all other good moral writers; study Montesquieu, Bolingbroke, Vinnius, &c., and all other good civil writers."

"Æt. xxv. 1760. I have read a multitude of law books; mastered but few. Wood, Coke, two volumes Lillie's Abridgment, two volumes Salkeld's Reports, Swinburne, Hawkins's Pleas of the Crown, Fortescue, Fitzgibbon, ten volumes in folio, I read at Worcester quite through, besides octavos and lesser volumes, and many others, of all sizes, that I consulted occasionally without reading in course, as dictionaries, reporters, entries, and abridgments.

"I cannot give so good an account of the improvement of my last two years spent in Braintree. However, I have read no small number of volumes upon the law the last two years. Justinian's Institutes I have read through in Latin, with Vinnius's perpetual notes; Van Muyden's *Tractatio Institutionum Justiniani*, I read through and translated mostly into English, from the same language. Wood's Institute of the Civil Law I read through. These on the civil law. On the law of England, I read Cowell's Institute of the Laws of England, in imitation of Justinian, Doctor and Student, Finch's Discourse of Law, Hale's History, and some reporters, cases in chancery, Andrews, &c., besides occasional searches for business. Also a General Treatise of Naval Trade and Commerce, as founded on the laws and statutes. All this series of reading has left but faint impressions, and a very imperfect system of law in my head.

[1] The present plan of publication renders it unnecessary to insert here the large extracts from the "Diary," originally introduced by the writer. Only such passages are retained as immediately illustrate his views of character. The remainder appear in the "Diary," as printed in vol. ii. p. 59, *et seq.*

"I must form a serious resolution of beginning and pressing quite through the plans of my lords Hale and Reeve. Wood's Institutes of Common Law I never read but once, and my Lord Coke's Commentary on Littleton I never read but once. These two authors I must get and read over and over again. And I will get them, too, and break through, as Mr. Gridley expressed it, all obstructions. Besides, I am but a novice in natural law and civil law. There are multitudes of excellent authors on natural law that I have never read; indeed, I never read any part of the best authors, Puffendorf and Grotius. In the civil law there are Hoppius and Vinnius, Commentators on Justinian, Domat, &c., besides institutes of canon and feudal law that I have to read.[1]

". . . Pretensions to wisdom and virtue,, superior to all the world, will not be supported by words only. If I tell a man I am wiser and better than he or any other man, he will either despise, or hate, or pity me, perhaps all three. I have not conversed enough with the world to behave rightly. I talk to Paine about Greek; that makes him laugh. I talk to Sam. Quincy about resolution, and being a great man, and study, and improving time; which makes him laugh. I talk to Ned about the folly of affecting to be a heretic; which makes him mad. I talk to Hannah and Esther about the folly of love; about despising it; about being above it; pretend to be insensible of tender passions; which makes them laugh. I talk to Mr. Wibird about the decline of learning; tell him I know no young fellow who promises to make a figure; cast sneers on Dr. Marsh for not knowing the value of old Greek and Roman authors; ask when will a genius rise that will shave his beard, or let it grow rather, and sink himself in a cell in order to make a figure. I talk to Parson Smith about despising gay dress, grand buildings and estates, fame, &c., and being contented with what will satisfy the real wants of nature.

"All this is affectation and ostentation. It is affectation of learning, and virtue, and wisdom, which I have not; and it is a weak fondness to show all that I have, and to be thought to have more than I have.

"Besides this, I have insensibly fallen into a habit of affecting wit and humor, of shrugging my shoulders, and moving, dis-

[1] Vol. ii. p. 104.

torting the muscles of my face. My motions are stiff and uneasy, ungraceful, and my attention is unsteady and irregular.

"These are reflections on myself that I make. They are faults, defects, fopperies, and follies and disadvantages. Can I mend these faults, and supply these defects?"

During his residence at Worcester, in 1757, Mr. Adams became personally acquainted with Jonathan Sewall, a young man descended from one of the most distinguished families of the province, but who, like himself, had inherited nothing from his ancestors but a college education and poverty. He was about seven years older than Mr. Adams, but was admitted only a short time before him to the bar. In 1757 and 1758, Sewall, who then resided at Salem, attended the sessions of the superior court at Worcester, and spent his evenings in Colonel Putnam's office with Mr. Adams, who was then a student there. Congenial tastes and sentiments soon bred a warm and intimate friendship between them, rendered interesting not only by its pleasing and long-continued intercourse of mutual good offices and kindness, but painfully so by its subsequent dissolution occasioned by the different sides which they took in the Revolution of Independence.

In the preface to the republication of the controversial essays, under the respective signatures of Novanglus and Massachusettensis, Mr. Adams, in 1819, so shortly before his own death, gave an account of Jonathan Sewall, and of the friendship which had subsisted between them.[1] Of their correspondence, a few small fragments only are known to remain. Mr. Adams, at that time, kept few and imperfect copies of his letters, and of those of Mr. Sewall to him none have been found among his papers. The following extracts from the copies of letters written in 1759, 1760, and 1761, are submitted to the reader as characteristic of their author at that period of his life, and while yet under the age of twenty-five.

[Note, by the Editor. The first of the three letters intended for insertion here has been printed in the "Diary," in the immediate connection in which the copy of it occurs in the manuscript.[2] In the place it was to occupy, one of three

[1] Vol. iv. p. 5, *et seq.* [2] Vol. ii. p. 79.

early letters of Mr. Sewall, which a closer examination of Mr. Adams's papers has revealed, is introduced. It is particularly appropriate, as being the one which called out the succeeding letter of Mr. Adams, that made the second of the original series. It is of value on other accounts. It discloses a project entertained at this time by Mr. Adams, though somewhat feebly, it would seem, of removing to Providence, no trace of which is found elsewhere. It likewise explains the purpose of the correspondence, which was mutual improvement, by stimulating the investigation of questions of law. But beyond and above all these, it sets in full light the genuine nature of the bond of sympathy between these young men, brought up in a small town of an obscure colonial settlement, with few objects immediately before them to excite their ambition or to nurse the purest aspirations. In this respect it may reasonably be doubted whether the lapse of time and the great change of circumstances in America, though opening an incomparably greater field of exertion to human abilities, have done any thing to improve upon the motives or principles here shown as setting them in motion.]

JONATHAN SEWALL TO JOHN ADAMS.

Charlestown, 13 February, 1760.

My Friend, — In my last, if I rightly remember, I joined with you in your panegyric on the superior rewards which ancient Rome proposed to application and study, and in your satire on those despicable *præmia*, which we, whose lot it is to live in the infant state of a new world, can rationally expect. But perhaps we have both been too hasty in our conclusions; possibly, if we pierce through the glare of false glory, too apt to dazzle and deceive the intellectual eye; if, in order to the forming a just estimate, we secrete the genuine from the imaginary rewards, we may find the difference much less than at first sight we are apt to conceive. For, let us, if you please, my friend, consider what was the palm for which the Roman orator ran. It was the plaudit of a people at that time sunk into a most shameful effeminacy of manners, governed by a spirit of faction and licentiousness, to which this father of his country at length fell himself a sacrifice. It was the highest

post of honor in that august empire, which hath since fallen an easy prey to Goths, Visigoths, Vandals, and other barbarians and uncivilized nations of the north. It was to be the first man in that *Roma Æterna*, which but for the names of Brutus, Cæsar, Cicero, Catiline, and a few other patriots, tyrants, orators, and conspirators, which have been perpetuated by the eminence of their owners in their respective employments, had been long since buried in eternal oblivion. To be caressed, applauded, and deified by Roman citizens, to be raised to the highest honors which Rome, the mistress of the world, could give, are rewards, it must be confessed, in their nature more dazzling, and, to an unthinking mind, more captivating and alluring to the toils of indefatigable study and close thinking; and in these, it will be acknowledged, Cicero had greatly the advantage of us. But are these the most striking? Are there not others, which we, as well as Cicero, have in prospect, infinitely superior in their nature, more refined, more lasting? What think you, my friend, of the inward pleasure and satisfaction which the human mind receiveth from the acquisition of knowledge? What of the rational delight which the benevolent man experienceth in the capacity and opportunity of doing good to his fellow-men? What of the heartfelt joy which the man of virtue overflows with, in relieving and supporting distressed innocence and goodness, and in detecting and punishing insolent vice?

But Cicero's name has been handed down through many ages with admiration and applause. So may yours. "Worth makes the man," forms the character, and perpetuates his memory. Cicero is not revered because he was Rome's consul. Had his orations been delivered in the little senate of Lilybæum or Syracuse, yet still they would have been esteemed as they are by all men of learning, and perhaps would have perpetuated the names of Lilybæum and Syracuse for many ages after they shall now be forgotten. And had A———n lived in Rome, it is more than probable we should never have heard his name. It is not the place where a man lives, nor his titles of honor in that place, which will procure him esteem with succeeding generations, though, perhaps, for the present, it may command the outward respect of the unthinking mob, for the most part dazzled with the parade and pomp of nobility. But if, in the

estimation of the world, a man's worth riseth in proportion to the greatness of his country, who knows but in future ages, when New England shall have risen to its intended grandeur, it shall be as carefully recorded among the registers of the *literati*, that Adams flourished in the second century after the *exode* of its first settlers from Great Britain, as it is now that Cicero was born in the six hundred and forty-seventh year after the building of Rome?

A man, by will, gives his negro his liberty, and leaves him a legacy. The executor consents that the negro shall be free, but refuseth to give bond to the selectmen to indemnify the town against any charge for his support, in case he should become poor, (without which, by the province law, he is not manumitted,) or to pay him the legacy.

Query. Can he recover the legacy, and how?

I have just observed that in your last you desire me to say something towards discouraging you from removing to Providence; and you say, any thing will do. At present, I only say, you will do well enough where you are. I will explain myself, and add something further, in some future letter. I have not time to enlarge now, for which I believe you will not be inconsolably grieved. So, to put you out of pain, your hearty friend, JONATHAN SEWALL.

P. S. I hope you'll write me soon. I think you are scrupulously exact in writing only in turn.

P. P. S. I am now going through Coke Littleton again, and I suppose you are likewise. If you make any new observations as you go along, or if any questions arise in your mind, it may possibly be of mutual advantage to communicate them. I shall do the same. This may, in some measure, answer the end of reading him together, which, I am persuaded, would be eminently beneficial, at least to J. S.

JOHN ADAMS TO JONATHAN SEWALL.

February, 1760.

I am very willing to join with you in renouncing the reasoning of some of our last letters.

There is but little pleasure, which reason can approve, to be received from the noisy applause and servile homage that is paid to any officer, from the lictor to the dictator, or from the sexton of a parish to the sovereign of a kingdom. And reason will despise equally a blind, undistinguishing adoration of what the world calls fame. She is neither a goddess to be loved, nor a demon to be feared, but an unsubstantial phantom, existing only in imagination.

But with all this contempt, give me leave to reserve (for I am sure that reason will warrant) a strong affection for the honest approbation of the wise and good both in the present and in all future generations. Mistake not this for an expectation of the life to come, in the poet's creed. Far otherwise. I expect to be totally forgotten within seventy years from the present hour, unless the insertion of my name in the college catalogue should luckily preserve it longer. When heaven designs an extraordinary character, one that shall distinguish his path through the world by any great effects, it never fails to furnish the proper means and opportunities; but the common herd of mankind, who are to be born, and eat, and sleep, and die, and be forgotten, is thrown into the world, as it were, at random, without any visible preparation of accommodations. Yet, though I have very few hopes, I am not ashamed to own that a prospect of an immortality in the memories of all the worthy, to the end of time, would be a high gratification to my wishes.

But to return. Tully, therefore, had but few advantages, in the estimation of reason, more than we have, for a happy life. He had greater political objects to tempt his ambition. He had better opportunities to force the hosannas of his countrymen. But these are not advantages for happiness. On the contrary, the passions which these objects were designed to gratify, were so many stings forever smarting in his mind, which, at last, goaded him into that excess of vanity and pusillanimity, for which he has been as often blamed as ever he was praised for his genius and his virtues. It is true, he had abler masters, and more opportunities for instructive conversation, in a city so fruitful of great men. But, in other respects, the rational sources of pleasure have been much enlarged since his day.

In the acquisition of knowledge, without which it would be a punishment to live, we have much greater advantages (whatever some ingenious men may say), than he had or could have. For the improvements in navigation, and the surprising augmentation of commerce, by spreading civilized nations round the globe, and sending men of letters into all countries, have multiplied the means of information concerning the planet we inhabit. And the invention of the art of printing has perpetuated and cheapened the means of every kind of knowledge, beyond what could have been imagined in his day. Besides, Europe has been, ever since his death, the constant theatre of surprising characters, actions, events, revolutions, which have been preserved in a sufficient plenty of memorials to constitute a series of political knowledge, of a greater variety of characters, more important events, and more complicated circumstances, and, of consequence, better adapted for an agreeable entertainment to the mind, than any that the world had ever known in his times. And, perhaps, there never was before, nor has been since his day, a period abounding with greater heroes and politicians, or with more surprising actions and events, than that in which we live.

In metaphysics, Mr. Locke, directed by my Lord Bacon, has steered his course into the unenlightened regions of the human mind, and, like Columbus, has discovered a new world. A world whose soil is deep and strong; producing rank and unwholesome weeds, as well as wholesome fruits and flowers. A world that is incumbered with unprofitable brambles, as well as stored with useful trees; and infested with motley savages, as well as capable of furnishing civilized inhabitants. He has shown us by what cultivation these weeds may be exterminated, and the fruits raised; the brambles removed as well as the trees grubbed; the savages destroyed as well as the civil people increased. Here is another hemisphere of science, therefore, abounding with pleasure and with profit, too, of which he had but very few, and we have many advantages for learning.

But in mathematics, and what is founded on them, astronomy and philosophy, the modern discoveries have done honor to the human understanding. Here is the true sphere of modern genius. What a noble prospect of the universe have these men opened before us! Here I see millions of worlds and systems of worlds, swarming with inhabitants all engaged

in the same active investigation of the great system of universal and eternal truth, and overflowing with felicity. And, while I am ravished with such contemplations as these, it imports me little on what ground I tread, or in what age I live.

The intention of the testator, to be collected from the words, is to be observed in the construction of a will; and where any title to lands or goods, or any other act, is devised to any one, without any mention of something previous or concomitant, without which the act or title is not valid, in such case the thing previous or concomitant shall, by implication, be devised too; *e. g.*

A man devises lands and tenements to A B, the said A B paying £100 out of the same lands to B C. Here are no words of inheritance or of freehold, you see. Yet, since the testator plainly intended that £100 should be paid to B C out of the land, it must be presumed that he knew the rule of law which entitles a devisee of lands incumbered with a charge, to a fee-simple, and, therefore, a fee-simple shall pass by implication. So, also,

A man devised lands and tenements to A B, in trust for C D and his heirs. Here are no words of inheritance; yet, as he has established a trust that may last forever, he shall be presumed to have intended a fee-simple in his devise, and the devisee shall hold the tenement to himself and his own heirs forever by implication, although the *cestui que trust* should die heirless to-morrow.

Now. *En mesure le manner.* The testator intended plainly that his negro should have his liberty and a legacy; therefore the law will presume that he intended his executor should do all that without which he could have neither. That this indemnification was not in the testator's mind, cannot be proved from the will any more than it could be proved, in the first case above, that the testator did not know a fee-simple would pass a will without the word heirs; nor than, in the second case, that the devise of a trust, that might continue forever, would convey a fee-simple without the like words. I take it, therefore, that the executor of this will is, by implication, obliged to give bonds to the town treasurer, and, in his refusal, is a wrongdoer; and I cannot think he ought to be allowed to take advantage of his

own wrong, so much as to allege this want of an indemnification to evade an action of the case brought for the legacy by the negro himself.

But why may not the negro bring a special action of the case against the executor, setting forth the will, the devise of freedom and a legacy, and then the necessity of indemnification by the province law, and then a refusal to indemnify, and, of consequence, to set free and to pay the legacy?

Perhaps the negro is free at common law by the devise. Now, the province law seems to have been made only to oblige the master to maintain his manumitted slave, and not to declare a manumission in the master's lifetime, or at his death, void. Should a master give his negro his freedom, under his hand and seal, without giving bond to the town, and should afterwards repent and endeavor to recall the negro into servitude, would not that instrument be a sufficient discharge against the master?

P. S. I felt your reproof very sensibly for being ceremonious. I must beg pardon in a style that I threatened you with as a punishment, a few letters ago.

Μηδ' ἔχθαιρε φίλον σὸν ἁμαρτάδος ἕνεκα μικρῆς.

However, it is not ceremony so much as poverty.

JOHN ADAMS TO JONATHAN SEWALL.

Sir, — You have, perhaps, expected from me, according to the custom of the world, some expressions of my condolence in your loss of Judge Sewall.[1] To be plain, I always feel extremely awkward, whenever I attempt, by writing or in person, to console the sorrowful, or to rejoice with those that do rejoice. I had rather conceal my own fellow-feeling in their joys or griefs, at the hazard of being thought insensible, than express any very great degree of either at the risk of being thought insincere.

The loss is certainly great to you and to the province in

[1] Stephen Sewall, chief justice of the superior court of Massachusetts, the person referred to, died on the 10th of September, 1760.

general; but Providence can neither be resisted, nor persuaded, nor fathomed. Implicit resignation is our greatest wisdom, both as our duty, and as the only sufficient source of tranquillity. Relying on this foundation, we should endeavor to turn our thoughts as much as we can from irretrievable misfortunes, and towards the means of procuring, according to the probabilities of things, future peace and pleasure.

And, in this view, instead of grieving excessively for what can never be avoided nor diminished, I shall be so free as to ask your opinion, and to set you on the search (if at any loss), concerning the following point of law practice. If a writ, triable before a justice, is served within six days, or five, if you please, of the time of trial; or one at court, within twelve or thirteen, what is the proper method of taking advantage of this insufficiency? Must this be pleaded in abatement, or must the action be dismissed? Must advantage be taken by motion or by plea? The law has provided that court writs shall be served fourteen days, and justices, at least, seven days, before the time of trial. And, in general, what is the method of taking advantage of insufficient services and returns?

And *quære* also. Suppose A leased a house, in 1756, for one year, to B, at ten pounds rent, for that year, and, after that year expired, B continued in the house another year, without any renewal of the lease, or any new contract for any certain rent. Would debt for rent, in the common form, lie, for the year 1757, at ten pounds also for that year?

Should be glad of an immediate answer to these questions, especially the last, as upon that turns an affair of importance to me.[1] In the mean time wishing you, amidst all the perplexities and disappointments of this uncomfortable state, as great a share of happiness as your genius and virtues may be said, in the language of mankind, to deserve,[2] I subscribe, as usual, your hearty friend, JOHN ADAMS.

[1] This is probably the case referred to in the "Diary," upon which the writer consulted Mr. Gridley, vol. ii. p. 98.

[2] Jonathan Sewall fell a sacrifice to the Revolution. His genius and his virtues, by removal from Massachusetts, lost their proper field of exercise never to gain any other. Fifteen years of isolation and discontent in the mother country were followed by a transfer to the then desolate region of New Brunswick, in which he had not time to reëstablish any social relations before he was called to pay the great debt of nature. Among the papers of Mr. Adams, a copy has

A project has just started into my mind, of collecting the anecdotes of the lives of all the great lawyers, ancient and modern. The character of Sulpitius suggested it to me. *Vide* "Middleton," vol. iii. p. 134.

In the year 1761, arose the question respecting the legality of writs of assistance, argued before the superior court of the province, by James Otis, and which Mr. Adams himself considered as the spark in which originated the American Revolution. It was, with reference to the liberties of the people, in substance the same as that upon general warrants, which, two years later, kindled a flame in the island of Great Britain. The writ of assistance is a process sometimes issued in England by

been found of a letter written by Sewall to a friend, in 1787, after he had come to St. John's, which presents a vivid picture of the nature of the trials to which he had been subjected, as well as of his own mind under the effect of them. No one could read it without feeling strong sympathy with the sufferer, not unmixed with surprise at the languor displayed by the British government in requiting his loyalty. Even the small salary allowed him as a colonial judge was suffered to run into arrears more than once, whilst the discontinuance of his place altogether was a question left ever hanging over his head. With such examples before the world, small is the encouragement held out to British colonists to take the side of authority in any contest with their brethren.

But what makes this letter particularly interesting in this connection is, that it contains a sketch of Mr. Adams, and an account of the last interview which the friends ever had. Though a little tinged with the feelings natural to the advocate of a losing cause, it is yet a good pendant to the character which Mr. Adams, on his side, has given of Mr. Sewall. Considering the nature of the civil war out of which they had emerged, the sentiments retained towards each other, as thus exhibited, are alike honorable to both. The following is the passage of Mr. Sewall's letter.

"While I was in London, my quondam friend, John Adams, sent me a complimentary card, and afterwards made me a long friendly visit, as Mrs. Adams soon after did to Mrs. Sewall. And they then earnestly pressed us to take a family dinner with them, in a way so evidently friendly and hearty, that I was sorry I could not comply. But having resolved to make no visits nor accept of any invitations, and having upon this ground previously declined invitations to dine with Sir William Pepperell, your friend Mr. Clark, and several other friends, I was obliged, to avoid giving offence, to decline this. When Mr. Adams came in, he took my hand in both his, and, with a hearty squeeze, accosted me in these words : 'How do you do, my dear old friend?' Our conversation was just such as might be expected at the meeting of two old sincere friends after a long separation. Adams has a heart formed for friendship, and susceptible of its finest feelings. He is humane, generous, and open; warm in his friendly attachments, though, perhaps, rather implacable to those whom he thinks his enemies. And though, during the American contest, an unbounded ambition and an enthusiastic zeal for the imagined or real glory and welfare of his country, (the offspring, perhaps in part, though imperceptible to himself, of disappointed ambition,) may have suspended the operation of those social and friendly principles which, I am positive, are in him, innate and congenial, yet sure I am they

the court of exchequer, and with which the officers of customs are armed with that ever odious privilege of entering private houses, shops, and warehouses, and of breaking open chests and trunks to detect smuggled goods. These writs of assistance were authorized by acts of 12 and 14 of Charles the Second, and by a subsequent statute of 7 and 8 William the Third. The provisions of the act of 14 Charles the Second, were extended to the colonies. Hutchinson, in the third volume of his "History," published since the decease of Mr. Adams, says that Governor Shirley had been in the habit of issuing, upon his own authority, these warrants, until informed indirectly by Hutchinson himself that they were illegal, and that he then directed that application should be made for them to the superior court. No such process, however, had before issued from that court. It was novel in point of form, and odious in substance. It was sanctioned or recognized by no act of the provincial legislature, and rested upon two acts of parliament, the first passed only two years after the restoration

could not be eradicated. They might sleep, inactive, like the body in the grave, during the storm raised by more violent and impetuous passions in his political career for the goal to which zeal and ambition, united, kept his eye immovably fixed; but a resuscitation must have been the immediate consequence of the peace. Gratified in the two darling wishes of his soul, the independence of America acknowledged and established, and he himself placed on the very pinnacle of the temple of honor, why, the very devil himself must have felt loving and good-natured after so complete a victory; much more, a man in whose heart lay dormant every good and virtuous social and friendly principle.

"Nature must, and, I have no doubt, did break forth and assert her rights. Of this I am so well convinced, that if he could but play backgammon, I declare I would choose him, in preference to all the men in the world, for my *fidus Achates*, in my projected asylum. And I believe he would soon find it the happiest state; for, if I am not mistaken, now he has reached the summit of his ambition, he finds himself quite out of his element, and looks back with regret to those happy days, when in a snug house, with a pretty farm about him at Braintree, he sat quiet, in the full possession of domestic happiness, with an amiable, sensible wife, and an annual increase of olive-plants round his table, for whose present and future support he was, by his own honest industry, for he was an honest lawyer as ever broke bread, rapidly making ample provision. He is not qualified, by nature or education, to shine in courts. His abilities are, undoubtedly, quite equal to the mechanical parts of his business as ambassador; but this is not enough. He cannot dance, drink, game, flatter, promise, dress, swear with the gentlemen, and talk small talk and flirt with the ladies; in short, he has none of the essential arts or ornaments which constitute a courtier. There are thousands, who, with a tenth part of his understanding and without a spark of his honesty, would distance him infinitely in any court in Europe. I will only add that I found many Americans in London, whose sentiments and conduct towards him were by no means so liberal or polite as I could have wished."

Letter to Judge Lee, St. John's 21 September 1785

of the Stuarts, in the spirit of the navigation acts, and the second in the reign of William the Third, sixty-five years before the time when it was to receive this new application. There can be no doubt that it was one of Hutchinson's expedients, adopted for the promotion of his own ambition, by paying sedulous court to the government in England. Mr. Adams had been admitted at that time as a barrister at the superior court; but his practice was still very limited, and his reputation as a lawyer had not reached the capital of the province. He was attending the court as a member of the bar, and heard, with enthusiastic admiration, the argument of Otis, the effect of which was to place him at the head of that race of orators, statesmen, and patriots, by whose exertions the Revolution of American Independence was achieved. This cause was unquestionably the incipient struggle for that independence. It was to Mr. Adams like the oath of Hamilcar administered to Hannibal. It is doubtful whether Otis himself, or any person of his auditory, perceived or imagined the consequences which were to flow from the principles developed in that argument. For although, in substance, it was nothing more than the question upon the legality of general warrants — a question by which, when afterwards raised in England, in Wilkes's case, Lord Camden himself was taken by surprise, and gave at first an incorrect decision, yet, in the hands of James Otis, this question involved the whole system of the relations of authority and subjection between the British government and their colonies in America. It involved the principles of the British constitution, and the whole theory of the social compact and the natural rights of mankind.

This argument, however, Mr. Otis appears never to have committed to writing; and but for Mr. Adams, no trace of it would, in all probability, have existed at that day. He took a few very imperfect minutes of it, as it was delivered in court. These were afterwards surreptitiously withdrawn from among his papers, and garbled with various interpolations. In that condition they came into the possession of Judge Minot, and were inserted in his "History of Massachusetts Bay," in 1803.[1] Fifty-seven years after the argument was delivered, Mr. Adams, in a series of letters to William Tudor, gave a much more

[1] They may be found, in a corrected form, in vol. ii. Appendix, (A.)

minute and circumstantial account of that memorable event.[1] It bears irrefragable internal evidence of its own general accuracy, and has been almost entirely transferred into the "Biographical Memoir of the Life of James Otis," afterwards published by William Tudor, Junior. No man can attentively read it without observing, in the argument, the seeds profusely scattered of the Revolution of Independence.

The effect of the argument was electrical, although the interest upon which it could immediately operate was necessarily limited to the colony where the question arose. It was not like the Stamp Act, which bore at once upon the property and passions of the people of all the colonies. The introduction of the writs of assistance would, in the first instance, have affected only the rights of a few merchants of Boston and Salem. But the principle of tyranny was in it, and it was the natural precursor of the Stamp Act.

The doctrines of natural and of English freedom brought to bear by Mr. Otis upon this cause, awakened and startled the people of the colony. Their impression upon the mind of Mr. Adams may be imagined by those who read and will compare together the hasty minutes which he took down in court at the time, and the lucid exposition of the whole argument which nearly threescore years afterwards he gave in his letters to Judge Tudor. It is apparent that this argument opened a new world before him; and he entered it with unhesitating step.

It is said, in the third volume of Hutchinson's "History," that "the chief justice" (Hutchinson himself) "was desired, by the first opportunity in his power, to obtain information of the practice in England, and judgment was suspended;" that "at the next term it appeared that such writs issued from the exchequer when applied for, and this was judged sufficient to warrant the like practice in the province. A form was settled, as agreeable to the form in England as the circumstances of the colony would admit, and the writs were ordered to be issued to custom-house officers, for whom application should be made to the chief justice, by the surveyor-general of the customs."[2] But no such application was ever made, nor was such a writ ever afterwards issued.

[1] Vol. x. pp. 314–362. [2] P. 94.

The progress made by Mr. Adams in the practice of his profession was not so rapid but that it left him much leisure for the prosecution of his studies. On the 25th of May, 1761, his father died of an epidemic fever, which at that time prevailed in the neighborhood of his residence, and of which his mother also barely escaped being the victim. After his death, Mr. Adams continued to reside with his mother and his two younger brothers till his marriage, in 1764.

His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had, in successive ages, served successively in the town offices of surveyor of the highways, selectmen, and assessors. The first office to which he himself was elected was that of surveyor of the highways, the duties of which he discharged with great zeal and assiduity. But he devoted himself, with all the ardor natural to his disposition, to the study of the civil law and of the laws of nature. Mr. Gridley had pointed his attention to the Institutes of Justinian, to the Code, and to the modern commentators upon them. His friend, Jonathan Sewall, was a frequent visitor at Braintree, where he was addressing Miss Esther Quincy, daughter of Edmund Quincy, Esquire, and whom Mr. Sewall afterwards married. At her father's house the friends often met and conversed together upon general topics of literature and law, maturing their minds at the same time by occasional correspondence upon the subjects thus opened for discussion. Sewall was then a patriot as warm as his friend. The course of events afterwards, the fascinations of Hutchinson, and misunderstandings with James Otis, drew him over to the royal party, and severed, forever, his destinies from those of his native country.

On the 25th of October, 1764, Mr. Adams was married to Abigail Smith, second daughter of William Smith, minister of the first Congregational Church and Society at Weymouth, the town next adjoining to Braintree. Mrs. Adams's mother was Elizabeth Quincy, daughter of Colonel John Quincy, of Mount Wollaston, many years representative from the town of Braintree in the Provincial Legislature, during a considerable period speaker of the House of Representatives, and afterwards a member of the Council. He had married the daughter of John Norton, the second minister of the Congregational parish at Hingham, and his mother was the daughter of Thomas

Shepard, the first of the name minister of Charlestown, one of the most eminent lights of the church at the first settlement of New England. With this maternal line of descent, Colonel John Quincy united that of a parentage from Edmund Quincy and William Tyng, two of the most distinguished inhabitants of Boston at the period of its settlement, and to whom Mount Wollaston, and a large tract of the land around it upon the bay, had been granted while the mount formed a part of the town of Boston. By this marriage, Mr. Adams became allied with a numerous connection of families, among the most respectable for their weight and influence in the province, and it was immediately perceptible in the considerable increase of his professional practice.

It was a connection altogether congenial to his character in other and far more important respects. The clergymen who came over with the first settlers of the Plymouth and Massachusetts colonies were graduates at one or the other of the English universities. They had received scientific educations. They had been bred to religious and metaphysical controversy, and were masters of all the literature of the age. The ruling interest and passion of their lives was doctrinal religion, and, as they were self-exiled from their native country for opinions adverse to their own interests no less than to the established articles of faith of their church, sincerity and fortitude were among the qualities the most prominent in their characters. In such a society it was impossible but that religious controversies should form the source of much dissension, and, in the management of all religious controversy, literature is a primary agent. The ecclesiastics who appear to have exercised so eminent an influence in the settlement of New England were men of learning and of letters. Some of them were among the first scholars of the time. The fondness for literature and learning was transmitted by them to their children. John Harvard, the founder of the college at Cambridge, was one of their own number. The spirit which animated him was ardent in the bosoms of them all. Their children educated there caught the inspiration of the fountain, and it circulated through every vein and artery of their colony. John Quincy was the great-grandson of Thomas Shepard, whose eloquence in sacred oratory was, by the admiration of his contemporaries, denominated

seraphic. His wife was a descendant from the family of John Norton, a name not less distinguished among the primitive pilgrims, and the seeds of classical taste and elegant literature, thus handed down through four successive generations, had lost none of their vigor and energy by the connection of his daughter with William Smith, the minister of Weymouth, himself a graduate of Harvard College.

Female education in general had been, and was yet, greatly neglected in comparison with that of the other sex. It was, comparatively, much neglected in England, where a knowledge beyond the common physical wants of the household was rather a passport to ridicule than to renown in the estimate of female reputation. In the frivolous accomplishments of modern times, the daughters of Mr. Smith were little versed, but of the literature which the constellation of poets and moralists of the reign of Queen Anne had disseminated over all the British dominions, they were possessed with a warm relish of the beauties, and with sentiments attempered to the moral principles inculcated by them. With the pages of Shakspeare and Milton, of Dryden and Pope, of Addison and Swift, they were familiar, no less than with those of Tillotson and Berkeley; nor were they unacquainted with those of Butler and Locke. In the taste for these and similar writings, Mr. Adams found in his wife a spirit congenial with his own. Perhaps no writer of any age or nation ever exercised a more beneficent influence over the taste and manners of the female sex than Addison, by the papers of the Spectator, Guardian, and Tatler. With these the daughters of Mr. Smith were, from their childhood, familiar. The sententious energy of Young, sparkling amid the gloom of his Night Thoughts, like diamonds from the lamp of a sepulchre, the patriotic and profound sensibilities of Thomson and Collins, preëminently the poets of freedom, kindling the love of country with the concentrated radiance and splendors of imagination, were felt and admired by Mrs. Adams in her youth, and never lost their value to her mind in mature age. She pointed them out to her children with the first lessons of the alphabet, and as the struggle for independence approached, the writer of this narrative and his brothers, in the days of Lexington and Bunker's Hill, learnt from her lips, as applied to the fall of Warren, the lines of Collins, on the death of Colonel Charles Ross, addressed to a lady, which, from the memory thence dated, he now repeats.

O'er him, whose doom thy virtues grieve,
Aerial forms shall sit at eve
And bend the pensive head;
And, fallen to save his injur'd land,
Imperial Honor's awful hand
Shall point his lonely bed.

The warlike dead of every age,
Who fill the fair recorded[1] page,
Shall leave their sainted rest;
And, half reclining on his spear,
Each wandering chief by turns appear
To hail the blooming guest.

In the same year of his marriage, Mr. Adams was chosen a selectman and assessor and overseer of the poor of the town of Braintree; the duties of which he discharged, as he before had those of surveyor of the highways, entirely to the satisfaction of the inhabitants. In the earlier part of the year he had gone through the smallpox by inoculation, at Boston, under the charge of Dr. Nathaniel Perkins and Joseph Warren, with the latter of whom he then formed an intimate acquaintance and friendship, and of whose skill in his profession, Mr. Adams and his family continued to enjoy the benefit until within a few weeks of the day when Warren fell, the first martyr to the liberties of his country.

In the spring of 1765, Mr. Adams, at the recommendation of Mr. Thacher, was engaged to attend the superior court at Pownalborough on Kennebec River. That place was then at almost the remotest verge of civilization, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he was enabled to reach it. After encountering the obstructions of nearly impassable roads, through an inhospitable region, and falling sick upon the way, he succeeded in reaching Pownalborough, and gained his cause, much to the satisfaction of his client. It contributed much to promote his interest and his reputation. It induced the Plymouth Company to engage him in all their causes, which were numerous, and required his annual attendance on the superior court at Falmouth for the succeeding ten years.

From the period of the Stamp Act may be dated Mr. Adams's entrance upon the theatre of politics. He drew up a petition

[1] The word is *recording*, the only variation that occurs from the original text.

to the selectmen of Braintree, and procured it to be signed by a number of the respectable inhabitants, to call a meeting of the town to instruct their representative in relation to the stamps. He prepared at home a draft of instructions, and carried them with him to the meeting. They were accepted by the town without a dissenting voice, and being published in Draper's paper, from a copy furnished to the printer at his request, were adopted by forty other towns of the province, as instructions to their respective representatives. Passages from them were also adopted in the instructions from the town of Boston to their representatives, which were drawn up by Samuel Adams.[1]

In the beginning of the year 1765, Mr. Gridley formed a project of a law club, or Sodality, who were to meet occasionally to read and discuss writers upon the civil law, and upon oratory; the object of which was the mutual improvement of the members. Of this club, Mr. Gridley proposed to limit, in the first instance, the number to three persons besides himself; Fitch and Dudley, practitioners at the bar, residing at Boston, nearly of the age and standing of Mr. Adams, and Mr. Adams himself; who, notwithstanding his residence at ten miles distance, entered, with enthusiastic ardor, into the design.[2] The design itself affords evidence of the lofty spirit and comprehensive mind of Jeremy Gridley. His own career was drawing towards its close. He was of a preceding generation, upwards of thirty years older than Mr. Adams, and at the summit of his profession in the province, having been for many years the attorney-general of the crown. He died on the 10th of September, 1767, within less than three years of the institution of this society. They had only a few weekly meetings, at which they read part of the feudal law, in the *Corpus juris civilis*, and the oration of Cicero for Milo, in the translations of Guthrie and of Davidson. Their readings were intermingled with comments and discussions, and it was in this society that originated the Dissertation upon the canon and feudal law, originally written by Mr. Adams, as an exercise for communication to this club.

[1] The instructions are printed in vol. iii. p. 465, *et seq.* Compare also the comments of the author of them, in an extract from his autobiography, in vol. ii. p. 152, *et seq.*

[2] See vol. ii p. 146.

At their meeting of the 21st of February, 1765, Mr. Gridley, who had introduced to them the treatise of rhetoric addressed to Herennius, usually printed with the works of Cicero, said: "Our plan must be, when we have finished the feudal law, to read Coke Littleton, and after him a reign, and the statutes of that reign. It should also be a part of our plan to improve ourselves by reading carefully the best English writers, and by *using ourselves to writing*. For it should be a part of our plan to publish pieces now and then. Let us form our style upon the ancients and the best English authors.

"I hope, I expect to see at the bar, in consequence of this Sodality, a purity, an eloquence, and a spirit surpassing any thing that ever appeared in America."

After citing this remark of Mr. Gridley, in the journal of that day, Mr. Adams adds: "This Sodality has given rise to the following speculation of my own, which I commit to writing as hints for future inquiries rather than as a satisfactory theory." This remark introduces the first sketch of the Dissertation upon the canon and feudal law. This paper is interesting for comparison with the Dissertation as finally published. The first essay was short, and it was composed at different times; the subject appearing to enlarge and to expand, from time to time, as the important occurrences of the year suggested new and additional considerations. It was written in several distinct manuscripts, nearly the whole matter of which was finally included in the published essay. There is, however, in the original draft the following passage, relating to the primitive settlers of British America, which is not in the printed Dissertation.

"I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."

This sentence was, perhaps, omitted from an impression that it might be thought to savor not merely of enthusiasm, but of extravagance. Who now would deny that this magnificent anticipation has been already to a great degree realized? Who does not now see that the accomplishment of this great object is already placed beyond all possibility of failure? [1]

[1] See vol. iii. p. 452, note.

The act of Parliament, commonly called the Stamp Act, passed that body in March, 1765. So little was there of anticipation of the consequences which it was to produce, so little was there of conception among the legislators of Great Britain of the character and temper of the people upon whom they were undertaking to levy taxes by a body in which they were not represented, that on the passage of the act through the House of Commons, the division in its favor was 294 to 49.

The annual meeting of the General Assembly of Massachusetts Bay was held on the 29th of May. The passage of the Stamp Act in Parliament was then known, but it was to commence its operation on the ensuing 1st of November. In the speech of Sir Francis Bernard, the king's governor at Boston, to the Colonial Assembly, delivered on the 30th of May, he took no direct notice of the Stamp Act, but began by saying that he had no orders from his Majesty to communicate to them, nor any thing to offer himself but what related to their internal policy. He then descanted to them upon his own exertions to introduce into the province three improvements, namely, potash, hemp, and the carrying lumber to the British markets. After enlarging upon these important topics, which he tells them are *proper* objects of their concern, he adds that they will have no occasion, as they had hitherto shown no disposition, "*vainly to attempt to transfer manufactories from their settled abode;* an undertaking at all times difficult, but, under the disadvantage of high-priced labor, impracticable."

He concluded the speech by an apologetic and monitorial paragraph, informing them that the general settlement of the American provinces, long before proposed, would now probably be prosecuted to its utmost completion. That it must necessarily produce some regulations, which, *from their novelty* ONLY, would appear disagreeable. But he was convinced, and doubted not but experience would confirm it, that they would operate, as they were designed, for the benefit and advantage of the colonies. In the mean time, a respectable submission to the *decrees* of the Parliament was their interest as well as their duty. That "in an empire, extended and diversified as that of Great Britain, there must be a supreme legislature, to which all other powers must be subordinate." But he added, "it is our happiness that our supreme legislature, the Parliament of Great

Britain, is the sanctuary of liberty and justice; and that the prince, who presides over it, realizes the idea of a patriot king. Surely, then, we should submit our opinions to the determination of so august a body, and acquiesce in a perfect confidence that the rights of the members of the British empire will ever be safe in the hands of the conservators of the liberty of the whole."

Hutchinson says, "that the House thought it a time for action rather than speculation; and that, contrary to usual practice, they suffered the speech to pass without any address or notice of any sort."[1] They did, nevertheless, on the afternoon of the day on which it was delivered, appoint committees to consider and report on the paragraphs respecting potash, hemp, and lumber. These committees never did report;[2] but, on the 5th of June, the Speaker of the House, together with Mr. Otis and three other members, were appointed a committee to take the last paragraph under consideration, to *prepare a proper answer* and report.

Neither did this committee report; but, on the next day, the House, "taking into consideration the many difficulties to which *the colonies* were and must be reduced by the operation of some late acts of Parliament," appointed another committee, consisting of the speaker and eight other members, of whom Otis was one, to consider what measures had best be taken, and make report. The measure had been preconcerted, for the committee reported immediately that it was highly expedient there should be a meeting, as soon as might be, of committees from the houses of representatives or burgesses in the several colonies on this continent, to consult together on the present circumstances of the colonies, and the difficulties to which they were and must be reduced by the operation of the late acts of Parliament for levying duties and taxes on the colonies, and to consider of a general and humble address to his Majesty and the Parliament to implore relief. That the meeting should be held at New York on the first Tuesday of October then ensu-

[1] *History*, vol. iii. p. 118.

[2] These were joint committees. It would appear that the statement in the text is not quite correct so far as the committee on hemp is concerned. For a report is mentioned as brought down on the 4th of June from the council, where it had been adopted, and, after debate, not accepted by the House. Probably it was not considered as "a proper answer." Hence a new committee, named the next day, from the House alone, of very different materials.

ing, and that a committee of three persons should be chosen by the House, on the part of the province, to attend the same. Further, that letters should be forthwith prepared and transmitted to the respective speakers of the several houses of representatives or burgesses in the several colonies, advising them of this resolution of the House, and inviting them to join, with their committees, in this convocation. Finally, that a letter upon the whole subject be prepared and forwarded to the agent of the province, in England.

The report was accepted without opposition. The speaker, with Mr. Otis and another member, was appointed to prepare the draft of a letter to the speakers of the other colonial legislative assemblies. The draft was reported, accepted, signed by the speaker by order of the House, and directed to be transmitted. On the same day the House made choice of James Otis, Colonel Worthington, and Colonel Partridge, as the committee to proceed to New York. Colonel Worthington excusing himself, Brigadier Ruggles was chosen to supply his place.

In this measure, it is impossible not to perceive the seminal principle of the subsequent union of the North American British colonies; nor can it be doubted that the credit of having originated it is exclusively due to James Otis. As the acting chairman of the committee, appointed to *prepare an answer* to the last paragraph of the governor's speech, he saw that a discussion with the governor about the duty of submission to the decrees of Parliament, and the happiness of acquiescing in perfect confidence that the rights of the colonies would be safe in the hands of the "supreme legislature" and the "patriot king," would be a superfluous and worse than useless waste of time. The act of Parliament was a grievance. But the principles in the concluding paragraph of the speech required an answer other than of words. The question at issue affected all the colonies alike, and, looking to the struggle which must ensue, it was apparent that the divided efforts of each separate colony must prove fruitless and unavailing. United counsels were the only resource to all the colonies for meeting the approaching crisis, and the answer to the speech was the appointment of the committee of Congress, with Otis at their head.

Here ceased, at that time, the action of the legislature. The

popular resistance had not yet commenced. It soon displayed itself with energy beyond the law. The stamps for official papers were transmitted from England, and the very form of such a servitude was as humiliating as the tax levied for the stamps was oppressive. It was known that Andrew Oliver, the secretary of the province, had solicited the office of distributor of the stamps when they should arrive. The person appointed as distributor for the colony of Connecticut arrived, in the beginning of August, from England. The government party received him with an affectation of distinction, and, when he left Boston to proceed to Connecticut, his colleague, the distributor for Massachusetts Bay, accompanied him out of town. In the expectation of a press of official duties, Oliver had erected, near the custom-house, a building for a stamp office. Early in the morning of the 14th of August an effigy of Oliver was found hanging high in air, suspended to a branch of an old tree at the south part of the Main Street of Boston.

By whom it had been placed there never was known, but it soon gathered a crowd of persons round the tree. Hutchinson, as chief justice of the province, ordered the sheriff to remove the effigy, and, if opposition should be made, to report the names of the opposers, that he might issue warrants for their arrest. The sheriff sent some of his deputies to execute the order, but they were overawed by the determination manifested by the people assembled, not to suffer the image to be taken away. The governor convened the council, but they were in consternation, and declined interfering in the affair. He called the council a second time in the afternoon. Still, nothing was done. A crowd of people continued assembled round the tree till late in the afternoon, when the effigy was taken down, placed on a bier, carried in solemn procession amidst the acclamations of a large concourse of people through the long Main Street, and over the floor of the town-house, while the governor and council were in session in a chamber overhead. It was thence taken down to Oliver's projected stamp office, which, in a few minutes, was levelled with the ground. They next proceeded to Fort Hill, upon which they kindled a fire, and burnt the obnoxious effigy to ashes. Oliver's house was not far off, and was not spared by the enraged populace. He and his family betook themselves to flight. The fence before

the house was broken down, sundry windows demolished, and the furniture of the house was roughly handled. Hutchinson undertook to disperse the rioters, not only without success, but to the imminent danger of his own person. He finally effected his retreat — of which he says not one word in his "History."

The next day, Oliver resigned his office of distributor of stamps; and gave a declaration, in writing, and under his signature, to be communicated to the inhabitants of the town, pledging himself to transmit his resignation immediately to England, and promising, with earnest asseveration, that he never would act in that capacity. In the evening of the same day the house of the Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Justice, Hutchinson, was surrounded and threatened. The multitude clamorously called for his appearance in the balcony, to make a declaration that he had *not* been in favor of the Stamp Act. One of his friends expostulated with the people in his favor, and finally assured them that he was not in the house, but had been seen going to his country-seat at Milton; upon which they dispersed, without doing much damage to the house.

But twelve days afterwards, on the 26th of August, on the night of the day upon which he had returned to town, his house was again attacked, and destroyed, he and his family having scarcely time to effect their escape from the fury of the populace. The houses of the register of the admiralty and of the comptroller of the customs, without being absolutely destroyed, were plundered, and rifled, and robbed by

"That worst of tyrants, an usurping crowd."

The next day the inhabitants of the town, in full town meeting, declared, by a unanimous vote, their utter detestation of the extraordinary and violent proceedings of a number of persons unknown, and charged the selectmen and magistrates of the town to use their utmost endeavors to suppress such disorders for the future. Hutchinson, in his "History," very significantly remarks, that beyond all doubt many of those who were immediate actors in, as well as those who had been abettors of those violent proceedings, were present at this unanimous vote.

That these proceedings were sincerely disapproved and deeply lamented by Mr. Adams, there is evidence more unequivocal than that of attendance at a town meeting, or concurrence with

a unanimous town-meeting vote. His private journal of the 15th of August, the day after the commission of the first popular outrage, contains an earnest and feeling remonstrance against it, with a candid statement of the causes which had been long instigating the resentments of the people against Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson. He perceived, not without serious reflection and concern, even the enthusiasm excited by his own draft of instructions to the representative of the town of Braintree, and he saw that among the most difficult and dangerous of the patriotic duties which he would be called to discharge, that of resisting, and moderating, and controlling the excesses of the people, even in the cause to which he was himself devoted, would become, perhaps, not unfrequently indispensable.[1]

These events, and the principles which they contributed to form and establish in his mind, gave a tone to his character, and had an overruling influence on the subsequent history of his life. He saw that the end of all popular movements of violence was destruction, and that they were ill adapted, under any circumstances whatever, to the furtherance of justice. The scenes of the month of August, 1765, were afflictive more to the steadfast and unwavering friends of liberty than to their adversaries. Nor were they confined to that period. They were the signal of dissolution to the authority of the royal government. None of the persons concerned in these outrages were ever punished. Six or eight were apprehended and committed to prison. But before the time of trial, the keys of the prison were extorted from the jailer, and the prisoners were all set at liberty. "People came in (says Hutchinson) from many parts of the country to view the ruins of the lieutenant-governor's house, outhouses, garden, &c., and, from the shocking appearance, could not help expressing a disapprobation of such acts of violence. Their prejudices, however, were not abated against the Stamp Act. The execution of it must be hindered in some other way."

It was at this period that the "Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law" was published. At the close of which, after a passing notice of the Stamp Act, the author says: "But I must proceed no further at present. The sequel, whenever I

[1] See the *Diary*, vol. ii. pp. 150, 151.

shall find health and leisure to pursue it, will be 'a disquisition of the policy of the Stamp Act.'" This came, however, in a different form from a newspaper speculation.

The stamps for the provinces of Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, arrived about the 20th of September. The General Court was convened by the governor to meet on the 25th of that month. He opened the session by a speech very ill-adapted to calm the effervescence of the public mind. Disclaiming all intention of dictating to the General Court, the speech was yet altogether composed of menaces, and admonitions of the irresistible power of the British Parliament, and of the wickedness, folly, and danger of attempting to oppose it. The next day, he sent to the House of Representatives a message announcing to them the arrival of a ship with the stamps, and observing that, as the person appointed to distribute them had resigned the office, no present use of them could be made. He had in the speech reminded them that, by the Stamp Act, all papers not duly stamped were to be null and void, and that all persons who should sign, engross, or write any such papers, would forfeit, for each fact, ten pounds; that if stamps should not be used, all public offices must be shut up; and he had desired them to consider what effects the stopping of two kinds of offices only, the courts of justice and the custom-houses, would have upon the generality of the people. After descanting, at some length, upon the consequences of this suspension of the administration of justice and of commerce, he had inquired: "Was it easy to form an adequate idea of a state of general outlawry; and might not the reality exceed the worst idea they could form of it?" And, after a picture as highly colored of anticipations from the stagnation of trade, he had said: "In short, can this province bear a cessation of law and justice, and of trade and navigation, at a time when the business of the year is to be wound up, and the severe season is hastily approaching? These," he added, "are serious and alarming questions, which deserve a cool and dispassionate consideration."

The conclusion of the long argument of the speech had an aspect rather ludicrous. It was a proposal that, if they were converted by its eloquence to the faith that it was better to submit to the Stamp Act than to resist its execution, he would

grant them a recess, during which they might go home and convince their constituents of the necessity of submission. Immediately after this, followed the message announcing the arrival of the stamps, and asking their advice what should be done with them.

The House appointed a large committee to prepare an answer to the speech, but both Houses made short work with the message. They answered the same day, that as the stamped papers had been brought without any directions to the government of the province, it was the sense of the House that it might prove of ill consequence for them anyways to interest themselves in the matter. They declined, therefore, to give him any aid or assistance therein. This answer sufficiently indicated the temper of the assembly, and the governor, the next day, adjourned their meeting to the 23d of October.

At the meeting of the assembly, in September, Mr. Otis was absent to attend the convention at New York. Samuel Adams first took his seat at the same session, as a representative from Boston, in the place of Oxenbridge Thacher, recently deceased. Adams was appointed on the committee to prepare an answer to the governor's speech, and it was composed by him. As he had the whole interval of the recess to prepare it, the answer was elaborate and full of the bitterest sarcasm.

Mr. Otis, in his pamphlet on the rights of the British colonies, had explicitly admitted the unqualified right of the British Parliament to enact laws binding upon the colonies, and the right had been as explicitly recognized by the Colonial Assembly. It was denied both by Samuel and John Adams, the former of whom, on this occasion, immediately after the adoption of his answer to the governor's speech, presented a series of resolutions, fourteen in number, with the following preamble.

"Whereas the just rights of his Majesty's subjects of this province, derived to them from the British constitution as well as the royal charter, have been lately drawn into question; in order to ascertain the same, this House do unanimously come into the following resolves."

And they were closed with an order,

"That all the foregoing resolves be kept in the records of the House, that a just sense of liberty and the firm sentiments of loyalty may be transmitted to posterity."

These resolutions were unanimously adopted by the House, though it is said by Hutchinson that three fourths of the members who voted for them were the same persons who, but one session before, had voted for an address explicitly admitting the right of Parliament to tax the colonies. In the resolutions, the direct issue was first taken upon the question of right. The right of the colonies was traced not merely to the charters, to Magna Charta, and the English constitution, but to the law of God and nature; to the common and primitive rights of mankind. The essence of all the resolutions was contained in the third and the tenth, the first of which declared the principle that representation and taxation are correlative, because no man's property can be taken from him but with his consent; and the second, that the inhabitants of the colonies are not and cannot be represented in the British Parliament. The fourteenth resolution was a declaration of loyalty and veneration for Parliament, to serve as a salvo for the rest.

The committee to prepare and report these resolutions was appointed on the 24th of October; they reported on the 26th; and, on the 30th, the resolutions were adopted by the House.

On the 1st of November the Stamp Act was to commence. An attempt was made to carry a vote declaring the necessity of proceeding in the business of the courts of justice and the custom-house without stamps. This was defeated, probably by the management of Hutchinson in the council, and, as it became evident to the governor that the longer the General Court should remain together, the more determined and daring would be the spirit of opposition to the government exhibited by them, he, on the 8th of November, prorogued the session till the 15th of January, leaving the question concerning the use of stamps unsettled.

At the custom-house, expedients were found for delivering clearances without the stamps; first, by granting clearances dated before the 1st of November, for vessels which sailed in the course of the whole of that month, and afterwards, at the peril of the merchants who took them out, they agreeing to take the risk of consequences upon themselves. The judges of the inferior courts and the judges of probate in all the counties, except Suffolk, transacted their business as usual, without notic-

ing the Stamp Act; but Hutchinson was chief justice of the superior court and judge of probate for the county of Suffolk, and persisted in preventing the former from being held, and in refusing to hold the other.

A town meeting was held in Boston, at which it was determined that a memorial should be presented to the governor and council, complaining of the closure of the courts of justice, and demanding, as of right, that their sittings should be resumed. The memorial was drawn up by Mr. Samuel Adams, and concluded by requesting to be heard by counsel, which request was granted.

The next day, Mr. John Adams, most unexpectedly to himself, received, by express, a letter from the town-clerk of Boston, William Cooper, informing him that the town, by a unanimous vote, had directed him to apply to Jeremiah Gridley, James Otis, and John Adams, Esquires, to appear as counsel for the town before the governor and council, in support of the memorial of the town, praying that the courts of law in the province might be opened.

It is one of the remarkable incidents in the life of Mr. Adams, that while the inhabitants of Boston, assembled in town meeting, were conferring upon him this distinguished mark of their good opinion and confidence, he was speculating, in his journal, in a tone of discouragement, far, however, from despondency, on the disastrous prospects which this interruption of his professional business brought up before him. It appeared not only to intercept all the promise of fame and fortune, which his industry and enterprise had been assiduously preparing, but it threatened even the prospects of his subsistence.

"I was (says the journal of 18th December) but just getting into my gears, just getting under sail, and an embargo is laid upon the ship. Thirty years of my life are passed in preparation for business. I have had poverty to struggle with; envy, and jealousy, and malice of enemies to encounter, no friends, or but few, to assist me; so that I have groped in dark obscurity, till of late, and had but just become known, and gained a small degree of reputation, when this execrable project was set on foot for my ruin, as well as that of America in general, and of Great Britain."

On the next day, after receiving the notification from the

town-clerk of Boston, his mind recurred to the reflections of the day before, thus: —

"The reasons which induced Boston to choose me, at a distance and unknown as I am, the particular persons concerned and measures concerted to bring this about, I am wholly at a loss to conjecture; as I am, what the future effects and consequences will be, both with regard to myself and the public."

"But when I recollect my own reflections and speculations yesterday, a part of which were committed to writing last night, and may be seen under December 18th, and compare them with the proceedings of Boston yesterday, of which the foregoing letter informed me, I cannot but wonder, and call to mind Lord Bacon's observation about secret, invisible laws of nature, and communications and influences between places that are not discoverable by sense.

"But I am now under all obligations of interest and ambition, as well as honor, gratitude, and duty, to exert the utmost of my abilities in this important cause. How shall it be conducted? Shall we contend that the Stamp Act is void — that the Parliament have no legal authority to impose internal taxes upon us, because we are not represented in it — and, therefore, that the Stamp Act ought to be waved by the judges as against natural equity and the constitution? Shall we use these as arguments for opening the courts of law? Or shall we ground ourselves on necessity only?"[1]

There was little time for preparation. The cause was heard by the governor and council on the evening of Friday, the 20th of December, with the doors of the council chamber closed to all, excepting the counsel of the town who addressed them. At the recommendation of Governor Bernard, they divided between them the points of law and the topics of argument. As the junior counsel, it was the duty of Mr. Adams to open the argument.

"Then it fell upon me, (says he, in his journal,) without one moment's opportunity to consult any authorities, to open an argument upon a question that was never made before, and I wish I could hope it never would be made again; *i. e.* whether the courts of law should be open or not? I grounded my

[1] See the *Diary*, vol. ii. p. 157, *et seq.*

argument on the invalidity of the Stamp Act, it not being in any sense our act, having never consented to it. But, lest that foundation should not be sufficient, on the present necessity to prevent a failure of justice, and the present impossibility of carrying that act into execution. Mr. Otis reasoned, with great learning and zeal, on the judges' oaths, &c. Mr. Gridley on the great inconveniences that would ensue the interruption of justice." [1]

Gridley was the attorney-general of the crown; and Otis could not, without inconsistency, assume the ground of the absolute nullity of the act; because he had, in his pamphlet upon the rights of the colony, expressly admitted the right of Parliament to enact laws for the colonies. In all controversies respecting the right of exercising power, the question widens and enlarges as they proceed. So it was in all the progress of the Reformation. So in the political revolutions of England in the seventeenth century. In the American Revolution, the question of legislative power had first arisen from an attempt in the Parliament to exercise it for a purpose of taxation. Chatham, in England, and Otis, in America, assumed a distinction between the powers of taxation and of general legislation. They admitted a general authority in the British Parliament, as the superintending power of the imperial realm, to make laws binding upon the colonies, but they maintained, as a principle of British liberty, that no British subject could be taxed, but by a body in which he was represented. The defect of this system was, that it conceded the question at issue, on one side, while it defended the sound principle on the other. The fourteen resolutions introduced into the House of Representatives of the province, at their recent session, and adopted unanimously by the House, first went to the fountain head of natural right for the principle. By the law of nature, no man has a right to impose laws more than to levy taxes upon another; and the principle of legislation, by a representative body, necessarily interdicts *all* arbitrary exercise of power. The freeman pays no tax, as the freeman submits to no law, but such as emanates from the body in which he is represented. On this basis, the Parliament possessed no right of enacting laws, binding upon

[1] Vol. ii. p. 158.

the colonies, and whatever legislative power to that effect had been exercised by the Parliament since the grants of the charters of the respective provinces had been abusive and unlawful. This was the doctrine illustrated by the resolutions of the legislature, and was the foundation of the argument of Mr. John Adams for the opening of the courts of justice.

Neither that argument, however, nor those of Mr. Adams's able and eloquent associates, succeeded with Governor Bernard and his council. They considered it as a question of law, to be decided by the courts themselves. Hutchinson speaks of the decision as an expedient resorted to with a view to evade the question. But he indicates another reason, doubtless more operative upon his own mind. He considers the people, for whose benefit the courts of justice were instituted, and who must be the sufferers by the interruption of their sessions, as responsible for the riotous proceedings of the mob, and for the weakness of the appointed distributor of stamps. Under the terror of a panic excited by threats of popular violence, Mr. Oliver resigns his office as distributor of stamps, and formally pledges himself, by an oath, that he will never serve in that capacity. Therefore, concluded Mr. Hutchinson, the whole people of the province of Massachusetts Bay shall be punished by a suspension of the administration of justice.

The influence of Hutchinson, however, prevailed only for a short time to interrupt the sessions of the superior court. The inferior courts of common pleas were held in the several counties of the province. So, also, were the courts of probate, excepting in Suffolk, and so odious was Hutchinson becoming, by his obstinacy in refusing to hold them, that he took, at last, an alarm, and actually intimated to Governor Bernard a wish to absent himself by a visit to England, if he would make a temporary appointment of another person to hold the probate courts during his absence. Bernard was willing to make, and, accordingly, did make, a temporary appointment, without requiring the absence of Mr. Hutchinson, who thus beheld another person freely perform the duties of the office of which he was the nominal incumbent. Within a few weeks afterwards the Stamp Act was repealed.

Among the phenomena, which most remarkably distinguish all times of high party excitement, are the shaking of the foun-

dation of morals, by the weakening of the solemn regard for truth in the general estimation of men. Of this, the period which succeeded the enactment and repeal of the Stamp Act, produced numerous examples, which made a deep and indelible impression upon the mind of Mr. Adams. One of these was a cause tried before referees, at Martha's Vineyard, between a woman by the name of Jerusha Mayhew and her relations. Robert Treat Paine was the counsel of one of the parties in this case; and Mr. Adams of the other. In this cause, as in one between Roland Cotton and a clergyman by the name of Jackson, at Woburn, in the county of Middlesex, and still earlier, in a trial between Hopkins and Ward, at Worcester, he observed that party spirit "seemed to have wrought an entire metamorphosis of the human character. It destroyed all sense and understanding; all equity and humanity; all memory and regard to truth; all virtue, honor, decorum, and veracity."[1] A profound moral sense, a firm unyielding temper, and an assiduous application to the science of ethics, preserved him from the contamination which he so energetically describes. There can be no situation in human life, where the incitements and temptations to depart from the straight line of correct moral principle are so trying as in that of a leader in popular commotions. The ground which, from his first introduction to public life, he took in the controversy between the colonies and Great Britain, was that the Parliament could not lawfully tax the colonies. His whole soul was in the cause. But to him it was not less the cause of order and of justice than of liberty. There is in the support and vindication of popular rights and principles a fascination, constantly tending to the adoption of popular prejudices, and to identify the right with the power of the people. The error of many of the leaders of the American Revolution was that of substituting, at all times, the voice of the people for the voice of God. Statesmen of such a description have no power to conceive or to maintain institutions of government. Their talent consists in destruction. They see nothing but abuses, and oppressions, and tyrannies to be suppressed. They can build up nothing. In the popular disorders and excesses, which distinguished the resistance to the execution of the

[1] *Diary* and *Autobiography*, vol. ii. p. 152, *et seq.*

Stamp Act, and in the dissolution of moral principle, by the contamination of party spirit, Mr. Adams found that it would be among the duties of his life to resist and withstand the errors of his own party, and to come in conflict with the passions of the people, perhaps as much and as often as to defy the power of the tyrant. This characteristic, if not peculiar to him, in the catalogue of revolutionary worthies, belongs, at least, to him in a preëminent degree. We shall find, that in the formation of the institutions, which have secured the enjoyment of orderly freedom to the people of this Union, no individual contributed any thing to be compared with his labors.

Two days after the decision of Governor Bernard and his council, that the question, whether the courts of justice should be reopened, was a point of law which the courts themselves must determine, a town meeting was held to receive the report of their committee upon their memorial. At this meeting, Mr. Adams, though not an inhabitant of the town, addressed them as one of their council. It was unanimously voted that the answer of the governor and council to the memorial was not satisfactory. But, after much discussion what further should be done, the consideration of that important question was deferred to a future day. Suggestions were thrown out, both by Mr. Adams and Mr. Otis, of daring and energetic measures, as worthy of consideration, but not to be precipitately adopted. Hutchinson, in his "History," bears very unequivocal testimony to the weight and significancy of these resolutions, that the movements of the government were *not satisfactory;* even when this simple declaration was not followed up by any other proceeding.

The repeal of the Stamp Act was accompanied by an awkward and ungracious declaratory act, asserting the *right* of Parliament to enact laws, binding upon the colonies in all cases whatsoever. Nothing could be more injudicious; but the colonies were not disposed to waste their energies in a war of words. They received the repeal of the Stamp Act with transports of joy, and disregarded the mere empty declaration of a right which they flattered themselves was never to be exercised. The spirit of resistance immediately subsided, and a general tranquillity prevailed until the project of levying internal taxes upon

the people of the colonies by act of Parliament was resumed in England.

Sir Francis Bernard, however, entangled himself in a controversy with the General Court, which survived the repeal of the Stamp Act, and from which his reputation never recovered. His speech, on calling them together, on the 25th of September, provoked a discussion upon the *right* of Parliament to tax the colonies, and, with an absurd argument, that the best way for the province to obtain the repeal of the Stamp Act was to yield implicit obedience to it, he concluded by offering them a recess, that the members might go home and teach the same lesson of loyalty to their constituents. The House took up both the speech and the Stamp Act with such a spirit that he took an alarm, and, three days after, prorogued the session to the 23d of October. On the 25th of that month they appointed a committee of seven members, on their part, to join a committee of the council, to consider and report some proper methods to prevent difficulties that might arise in the proceedings of courts of justice through the province, and any other matters after the 1st of November, when the operation of the Stamp Act was to commence. This committee reported a resolution, requiring the courts of justice to proceed without the stamps, as if the act of Parliament, prescribing the stamps, had never been enacted. The council, to whom this report was made, sent it to the House, to act upon it first. The report was, on the 30th of October, recommitted by the House, with directions to the committee to sit forthwith, but nothing further was heard from them. On the 5th of November, the governor prorogued the General Court to the 15th of January, with a speech bitterly complaining of the personal injustice done him in the answer of the House of Representatives to his former speech, boasting of his attachment and services to the province, and concluding by a menace, that they will force him to be cautious how he forces his services upon them, and by tauntingly advising them not to cast off any of their natural and professed friends.

The House were precluded, by the prorogation, from answering this speech, but at the adjournment they did not pass it over; their reply was keen and sarcastic, and of that character which imbitters controversy without bringing it to a close.

They appointed a committee of grievances, who reported

several resolutions, one of which was, "that the shutting up the courts of justice, particularly the superior court, has a manifest tendency to dissolve the bands of civil society, is unjustifiable on the principles of law and reason, dangerous to his Majesty's crown and dignity, a very great grievance to the subject that requires immediate redress; and that, therefore, the judges and justices, and all other public officers in this province, ought to proceed in the discharge of their several functions as usual."

This resolution passed in the House of Representatives, by yeas and nays, 81 to 5; but, by the management of Hutchinson, and the influence of the crown officers, who were members of the council, was evaded in that body.

At the ensuing session of the legislature, in June, 1766, it was known that the Stamp Act was repealed. But Bernard, retaining all his resentments, exercised his negative upon the choice of the House, of James Otis for their Speaker. The House, on their part, in the choice of councillors, left out the lieutenant-governor, Hutchinson, and three other crown officers, and supplied their places with ardent patriots. The governor negatived six of the councillors chosen by the House, and vented his spleen, in his speech, by a bitter complaint and denunciation of the House for excluding the crown officers from the council, a measure by which he exposed the peevishness and impotence of his temper, under a silly delusive hope that the House might be scolded into a subsequent election of the same crown officers whom they had excluded. He thus lost the moment for reconciliation, and the remainder of his administration was one continual snarl of contention with both branches of the General Court, till he was ordered home to England, in June, 1769.

These controversies served to keep alive the disaffection of the people to the British government; but during the two or three years which immediately succeeded the repeal of the Stamp Act, the question of authority between the mother country and the colonies was, in a great measure, suspended. Mr. Adams was constantly and assiduously occupied in the practice of his profession, with a steady increase of business and of reputation. In the spring of 1768, he removed his residence from Braintree to Boston, and, in the course of that year, through his friend, Jonathan Sewall, then attorney-general of the province, Governor Bernard offered him the temporary

appointment of advocate-general in the court of admiralty then vacant, and of the confirmation of which, by the king, there could be no doubt. This offer he promptly and decisively declined, although it was tendered with an explicit assurance that no sacrifice of his political sentiments or opinions would be required or expected of him by his acceptance of the place.

The following extract from his "Diary" is characteristic of the state of his mind at that period of his life.

"1768, *January* 30, Saturday night. — To what object are my views directed? What is the end and purpose of my studies, journeys, labors of all kinds, of body and mind, of tongue and pen? Am I grasping at money, or scheming for power? Am I planning the illustration of my family, or the welfare of my country?

"These are great questions. In truth, I am tossed about so much from post to pillar, that I have not leisure and tranquillity enough to consider distinctly my own views, objects, and feelings. I am mostly intent, at present, upon collecting a library; and I find that a great deal of thought and care, as well as money, are necessary to assemble an ample and well-chosen assortment of books. But, when this is done, it is only a means, an instrument. Whenever I shall have completed my library, my end will not be answered. Fame, fortune, power, say some, are the ends intended by a library. The service of God, country, clients, fellow-men, say others. Which of these lie nearest my heart?

> Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
> As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
> The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds,
> Another still, and still another spreads;
> Friend, parent, neighbor, first it will embrace,
> His country next, and next all human race.

I am certain, however, that the course that I pursue will neither lead me to fame, fortune, power, nor to the service of my friends, clients, or country. What plan of reading, or reflection, or business can be pursued by a man, who is now at Pownalborough, then at Martha's Vineyard, next at Boston, then at Taunton, presently at Barnstable, then at Concord, now at Salem, then at Cambridge, and afterwards at Worcester? Now

at sessions, then at pleas; now in admiralty, now at superior court, then in the gallery of the House? What a dissipation must this be! Is it possible to pursue a regular train of thinking in this desultory life? By no means. It is a life of *here and everywhere*, to use the expression that is applied to Othello by Desdemona's father. Here and there and everywhere — a rambling, roving, vagrant, vagabond life; a wandering life. At Mein's bookstore, at Bowes's shop, at Dana's house, at Fitch's, Otis's office, and the clerk's office, in the court chamber, in the gallery, at my own fire, I am thinking on the same plan."[1]

Before his removal to Boston, in the spring of the year 1768, Mr. Adams wrote a letter to the town of Braintree, declining a reëlection as one of their selectmen. He removed into a house in Brattle Square, known by the name of the White House, and in which Mr. Bollan had lived many years before. After his removal, he attended the superior court at Worcester, and the week after at Springfield, then in the county of Hampshire. Here, he was accidentally engaged in a cause between a negro and his master, which he argued in such a manner as engaged the attention of Major Hawley, and introduced an acquaintance, soon after strengthened into a friendship which continued until the death of Mr. Hawley, on the 10th of March, 1788.

During his absence on this circuit, a convention was held in Boston, the commissioners of the customs had arrived, and an army landed. Two regiments had arrived from Halifax, and two more had been ordered from Ireland. The General Court had been dissolved by Governor Bernard, and he had refused to comply with a request from the council to convene a new session of the legislature. The troops were quartered upon the town of Boston, and it was impossible to mistake the purpose for which they had been ordered there. On the 12th of September, the inhabitants of Boston held a town meeting, and invited the people of the province to send delegates to a convention at that place in ten days from that time. The convention, accordingly, met on the 22d of September, and continued about eight days in session. They petitioned the governor to convene the General Court. He refused to receive their petitions, but

[1] Vol. ii. p. 208. The *Autobiography* explains the offers of government more fully. P. 210, *et seq.*

sent messages to them, to warn them of their danger in their approaches to what he deemed treasonable practices. Upwards of one hundred towns were represented in the convention, and their proceedings marked great moderation and discretion. Hutchinson says, it must be allowed by all that the proceedings of this meeting had a greater tendency towards a revolution in government than any preceding measures in any of the colonies; but observes that they proceeded with less spirit than was expected.[1]

The assembling of this convention was indeed the most revolutionary measure that had yet been taken in the colonies. But the measure of the British government, in ordering four regiments of soldiers to be stationed in a populous town in time of peace, was also the most offensive provocative to rebellion which had yet been given. So direct a menace of military execution held up *in terrorem* over the principal town, not only of the province but of all the British colonies, must, necessarily, produce one of two consequences; it must either break down the spirit of the people by intimidation, or it must rouse them to the highest pitch of exasperation, and kindle every spark of energy latent in every bosom. The most urgent want of a people, suddenly placed in such a condition, is of counsel; and the next is sympathy. The *immediate* danger was pressing only upon the people of Boston. To whom could they fly for refuge or for aid but to their legislature, to the representatives of their neighbors and fellow-citizens of the province? But the royal governor had dissolved the General Court, and refused to convene them. The only alternative left to the people of Boston was submission, or revolutionary resistance, and they resorted, almost by instinct, to the latter. They were justified by the occasion; and the lesson which the royal governor should have drawn from this revolutionary movement was, that regiments of soldiers can carry into execution obnoxious laws, only over a people of slaves.

The first effect of the approach of the troops was to raise angry and inflammatory debates and captious questions of law, not only among the people but in the government itself. Where were the troops to be quartered? For this it was the duty of

[1] *History*, vol. iii. p. 205.

the governor to provide. He consulted the council. They advised him to apply to the selectmen of Boston, who refused to take any concern in the matter. The council then advised the governor to quarter the troops on Castle Island, within the jurisdiction of the town, but three miles distant from it, and a grave discussion was held between them upon the question of construction of the act of Parliament. The troops could be stationed there, where their artillery and their bayonets would be as harmless and inefficient to overawe the inhabitants of Boston, as if they had been encamped at Blackheath or quartered on Tower Hill in London. The governor insisted that the intention of ordering the troops to Boston was to keep the peace, and suppress the riotous spirit of the people, and that it would be a mockery to quarter them upon an island three miles off. The council contended that the act of Parliament provided that, in towns where there were barracks, the troops must occupy them, and not be quartered upon the inhabitants. There were barracks upon Castle Island, and it was within the town. The troops must therefore be stationed there.

After much altercation between the governor and council, aggravated, after the arrival of the regiments, by the interposition of their commanding officer, Colonel Dalrymple, and of General Gage, the commander-in-chief, who came from New York to Boston, to sustain by his authority the demands of the governor; after successively using, by main force, Faneuil Hall, the representatives' room, and all the others, excepting the council-chamber, in the town-house, and the manufactory house of the province, for lodgments for the soldiers, and compelled, by the public clamor, to evacuate them all, "no further attempts," says Hutchinson, "were made to carry the act into execution." The general found it necessary to hire houses for the troops, which were obtained with difficulty, and to procure the articles required by act of Parliament at the charge of the crown.

The loathing and disgust manifested by the inhabitants of the town at the first appearance of the troops, was succeeded by the bitterest rancor and indignation daily festering to a head, by continual incidents of casual collision between the people and the soldiers. The very sight of the fiery scarlet uniform was as exasperating to the people as that color is said

to be to the lion. Mather Byles, the only Tory clergyman of the town, and the most inveterate punster of the province, attempted to turn the public indignation into burlesque, by saying to a Whig, with whom he was standing one day, to see them reviewed on the Common: "Sure, you ought not to complain; for here you see your grievances red-dressed." The Bostonians laughed at the wit, though spurious, and forgave the witling for this and numberless other jokes with which he entertained them for a long series of years, and for which, though not very compatible with the gravity of a Puritan pulpit, he might have been termed the King's Yankee jester. They enjoyed the pun and forgave the punster, even while their bosoms boiled to overflowing against their "red-dressed grievances" and their commander.

The officers of the regiments had been ordered to maintain over them a strict and rigorous discipline, and endeavored faithfully to execute their orders. But idle men, as soldiers in time of peace must always be, with arms in their hands, and subject to frequent insults, cannot be otherwise than insolent and licentious. The same inflammatory passions working in hostile spirit upon both classes of the population, the citizen and the soldier, were perpetual stimulants to desperate and fatal collisions between them. The crisis and the catastrophe came on the 5th of March, 1770. The accidental ringing of one of the town-bells at an unusual hour, in the darkness of the evening, called numbers of the inhabitants from their houses into the streets. A sentry standing upon guard was insulted by one of the people of the town — a brawl ensued — a corporal's guard upon duty, ordered by their commander, Captain Preston, to repair to the aid of their companion, surrounded by a cluster of the inhabitants, not exceeding twenty-five or thirty in number, provoked beyond endurance by the insulting language and missile weapons which assailed them, fired, at the order of the captain, into the midst of the assemblage, and killed five of their number: Crispus Attucks, Samuel Gray, Samuel Maverick, James Caldwell, and Patrick Carr.

No event, in the course of the American Revolution, was more critical and important to the principles in which it originated, and in which it was destined, ultimately, to a triumphant consummation, than this.

The first impression that it made upon the people of the town was of execration and horror at what was deemed a wanton and unprovoked massacre of unarmed, inoffensive, and defenceless innocent citizens. It was called at once the Bloody Massacre; and in the general feeling of the people, it retained ever after that appellation. The first outpouring of the popular resentment was for the punishment of murder to all the men who had fired upon the citizens, and to their commander, Captain Preston. They surrendered themselves to regular warrants of arrest, and were all indicted for the murder of each of the persons who had fallen.

But there was another point of view, in which the transaction was considered by the patriots upon whose leading minds rested the responsibility of regulating and directing the popular movement of the resolution. The continuance of the two regiments in the town after this catastrophe was altogether insupportable. The inhabitants of the town were immediately called together; and a committee was appointed to wait upon the governor, and demand the immediate removal of the troops from the town.[1]

[1] At this point terminates the admirable sketch which had been designed for a picture of his father, by John Quincy Adams. Deeply is it to be regretted that the same hand could not have filled up the coloring, in all its length and breadth, with its vigorous and brilliant touch!

CHAPTER III.

THE BOSTON MASSACRE — DEFENCE OF THE SOLDIERS — RELATIONS TO THE PATRIOTS DOWN TO JUNE, 1774.

COULD any person, gifted with adequate powers of sense, though with not more than ordinary intelligence, have been lifted, on the evening of the 5th of March, to a point above the earth high enough to take in at a glance events occurring at places widely distant from each other in the British empire, he would have been at no loss to comprehend the causes which were so soon to effect a disruption of its parts. Such a position, denied to contemporaries, always too near the scene to measure exactly the relations of things, is supplied to their successors, who, if they do not look down, can at least look back, and calmly survey at the same moment all the parts of the picture of the past which the recorded testimony of actors and witnesses has combined to paint for them. The incidents of that night were of momentous importance to the nations of both hemispheres. "On that night," said Mr. Adams, many years afterwards, "the foundation of American independence was laid."[1] Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the foundation already laid then first began to rise to the sight. However this may be, the consequences to Mr. Adams himself were decisive. On both sides of the Atlantic, within the same hour, occurrences were taking place, which conspired to fix him in the career he was destined afterwards to pursue. It was the moment, in London, of the appearance of a new prime minister to explain to the Parliament and to the nation his ideas of an American policy. It was the moment in the little town of Boston, one of the most remote of British dependencies, of an exposition, on the part of America, of the effects produced

[1] Vol. viii. p. 384.

by that of his predecessors. Of these, during the ten years that George the Third had reigned, there had already been several; but not one had succeeded in maintaining himself in office, not one had been supposed to represent the true disposition of the sovereign, his master. The accession of Lord North was the signal of a new era. All the Whig leaders had been tried in turn, and all had equally failed to please. North was not a Whig, nor prominent for family, or wealth, capacity, services, or experience. His recommendation to the king was that he would consent to serve him as a screen from the tyranny of those aristocratic families to which his own had owed the crown. Thus dependent upon the royal favor for his place, the inference was general that he at least would truly reflect the royal views. Hence the unusual assemblage on the benches of the Commons this evening. Hence the curiosity to learn the principles upon which a question was to be treated which had been steadily increasing in difficulty of solution until even the most obtuse began to suspect that it needed a master mind.

At the time when the youthful ruler, in assuming the crown, announced to his people the gratifying fact that at last they had a sovereign, "born and educated among them, who gloried in the name of Briton," it did seem as if the all-subduing energy of William Pitt had succeeded in setting him on a pinnacle higher than any of his predecessors had ever reached. Especially, in America, had the minister completely gained his point in crushing the power of France forever, and in fixing the British sway upon what might have been presumed imperishable foundations. Yet but few days elapsed before it became certain that gratitude was not among the most shining qualities of the new monarch, and that his servant's genius was too towering to be otherwise than painfully oppressive to his own dogged mediocrity. Pitt consequently retired before he had had time to cement the edifice he had so laboriously constructed; and the men who took his place, instead of understanding his work, soon contrived, without intending it, to sap all its foundations. The first of the series was George Grenville, whose skill consisted in applying, on a sudden, the arithmetic of the counting-house to the gorgeous statesmanship of his relative and predecessor. Without a single precaution,

and scarcely dreaming of objections, he ventured to point out America as an unfailing resource for future extravagance in Great Britain. His Stamp Act served no purpose other than to spread alarm from one end of the colonies to the other. Resistance unexpectedly followed, when other causes stopped Grenville in mid career, and brought in the Marquis of Rockingham — a feeble advocate of a compromising policy, which removed the obnoxious act that created, without retracting the doctrine that justified, the alarm. A new turn of the wheel brought up Charles Townshend, the favorite of the Commons, who held the measure of colonial rights in small esteem by the side of the smiles of that assembly. But death soon removed him; and the next leader was Lord North, the fourth in five years, whose duty led him to the treatment of the momentous question of colonial interests, and who was now called upon to untangle the skein, by this time made somewhat intricate, and to show, in answer to the anxious London merchants, what the course of the thread was thereafter to be.

Surely this brief review of the manner in which so great a subject had been treated, does little honor to the judgment or penetration of those to whose hands the administration had been entrusted. Yet Burke and Gibbon, the finest minds of their age, though differing in almost every thing else, have concurred in presenting to posterity, in the most attractive forms, the public men of these times as belonging in the front rank of British statesmen. Such a beautifier of imperfect figures is the illusive mirror of national pride! Could they have utterly forgotten the maxim of one of an earlier time, but of incomparably wider reach of mind, that "nothing destroyeth authority so much as the unequal and untimely interchange of power pressed too far, and relaxed too much"?[1] Can those who in ten short years succeeded in toppling down the edifice which a real statesman had laboriously erected, and that without a single adequate motive, truly deserve eulogy? Grenville had ventured an empire upon a question of pounds and shillings. Townshend had staked it upon the pride of the country gentlemen. Neither of them had a conception of the true nature of the prize he was throwing away. Townshend's bravado had

[1] Bacon's Essays. Of Empire.

laid duties, simply for the sake of laying them. Of the four articles selected to repeat the experiment of taxation, glass, paper, paint, and tea, only the last typified more than the shadow of an event. That was, indeed, a reality. It prefigured a system; but it did so in a most unfortunate shape. For it stood out alone, a clear, simple, unfortified object of assault. Had the minister designed to provoke resistance, he could not have chosen a more tempting object. Tea was a product purely foreign, easily identified, even if not brought over in the manner it was, in large masses, filling the ships that conveyed it. To the introduction of such an article, so offered, nothing was more easy than successful opposition. At Boston, a few persons subsequently threw it into the dock. Elsewhere, it perished by a mere process of isolation. Nowhere did it elude pursuit. The consequence was that authority appeared to have been triumphantly defied. But it was not the risk of tea which had roused the sensibility of the merchants and manufacturers. Agreements not to import any thing at all, carried with them to their minds far more dire results. It was the alarm caused by the news of these popular combinations, that stimulated the petition from the city of London, upon which the House of Commons was now to act.

This petition prayed for the repeal of *all* the duties. But not for reasons affecting the interests of those expected to pay them, or touching, in the remotest degree, the *right* of Parliament to impose them. The motive assigned was that the act had injured the traders of London. The colonists were associating for the purpose of cutting off the consumption of goods manufactured in and supplied by the mother country. The effect was injurious to the prosperity of the island, and *therefore* they prayed for repeal. But, as for the manner in which the act affected any rights of their brethren on the other side of the Atlantic, it was as little thought of as if these had belonged to the flying island of Laputa.

The disturbed state of things in America had been precipitated mainly by the vacillations of government policy. Such had been the advancing and then retreating, so manifest the good-will to propose, and so trifling the energy to execute, that power had crumbled in the process. To Lord North nothing was left but to build up the edifice anew. His success

depended upon his ability to appeal to single and positive ideas. In the condition of America, little could be hoped from half-way measures, which had been already tried, with no good result. A stronger man would have repealed every restriction, and relied upon kindness alone to restore good-will, or else he would have adhered to all that had been done, and sent out an armed force large enough to look down opposition. North did neither. In the cabinet, opinions were equally divided. A moiety stood for concession. But for this he was not prepared. The king did not like it, and it was his disposition to please the king. His voice turned the scale in favor of the policy pursued, so that on him, next to George the Third, must the greatest share of responsibility for what followed, rest. It was the same middle path, the perpetual resource of second-rate statesmen, which his Rockingham predecessors had equally tried to tread. They had, surely, stumbled enough to supply him with a warning. But that was what North cared not to understand. His glance shot no further than the confines of the court or the circle of the ministerial benches. The arguments marshalled by him for use on this memorable night faithfully portray his later policy. "Paper, paint, and glass," said he, "three of the four articles taxed, are the product of *British* industry. The manufacture of them is to be encouraged, and the sale promoted. To tax these has been a commercial mistake. For this reason the prayer of the petitioners may be granted, to the extent of repealing the duty on those articles. But with tea, the case is different. It is not produced within the British islands. The London factor has no interest in it beyond the charges of forwarding it from the producer to the consumer, both out of the limits of Great Britain. The tax falls on them; and, being collected from the colonists, may very properly become a source of revenue, out of which the officers of their governments, civil and judicial, can be made, in pursuance of the original design, to derive a support wholly independent of their good-will."

This was to him a sufficient reason for refusing to rescind the tax; but he had another and a stronger one. The *right* to tax was affirmed in the preamble to Townshend's bill. It had been denied in America. The words must, therefore, remain upon the statute-book as a test of principle, at least

until the time when all the combinations formed against it should be dissolved. "For his part," he added, "he had little doubt that this time would very soon come. Necessity would break the rule, and habit might be relied upon to do the rest. The latest accounts were very favorable to this expectation, and only perseverance was needed to dissipate the remnants of opposition. In any event, however, he was not to be moved, so long as a whisper of a threat could be heard from across the water."

Such was the exposition made by the new premier, purblind to the rights of a continent, whilst he applied a microscope to the interests of a few hundred manufacturers and merchants of London. The Commons listened with profound attention, even though the king's friends stood ready to confirm without hearing. Yet, through the long and tedious debate which followed, indicating little suspicion of the precipice which was opening under their feet, peers out here and there a symptom of mistrust that the right way had been chosen. Many went home without voting. Some wavered to the last. Dr. Franklin, who sat anxiously watching the issue, affirms that it finally turned upon the assurances given by North, that the colonists were yielding. Two hundred and three sustained him against one hundred and forty-two dissentient. The minister retired, complacently reflecting on the happy issue of this his first trial; and his supporters went home yielding to the illusion he had raised, that the fissure, which had been opening in the empire, was on the point of closing forever. A little spirit would do every thing. So said George in his earliest note to his new minister. "It was all that was needed to restore order to his service."

Yet, during the very time that this imposing scene was enacting in the parliamentary halls, another, very different, but not less interesting, was passing in one of the places most to be affected by the decision. Little had his Majesty's faithful Commons taken note of the interests, the principles, or the passions of those on the earnings of whose labor, in the vast region of North America, they had persisted in claiming the right to draw at pleasure. Still less had the premier imagined that whilst he was calmly assuring his followers of the approaching dispersion of further opposition, events were happening which

marked significantly enough the fact that the eyes of the American colonist no longer saw in the British soldier either a brother in arms, or a protector of his hearthstone. To be sure, the town of Boston in New England, relatively to the densely populated metropolis on the Thames, was but a speck. Scarcely sixteen thousand souls could be counted within its limits, and the times had not, for many years, favored an increase. They had had so little to tempt avarice, that, for a century and a half, the people had been suffered, with little obstacle, to take care of themselves as they pleased, at home. Whatever restraints had been put upon their trade by the mother country, in pursuance of the selfish commercial theories of that age, had been observed where there had been no temptation to break through them, and tacitly set aside where their interests had prompted a different course. And this had been done so long with impunity, that habits of mind favorable to entire personal freedom had been formed even among a large class who seldom get so far as to an analysis of principles. The notion of the existence of any physical power in the state, beyond the little necessary to prevent the commission of common offences against the order of a small community, was scarcely brought home to them. It was amidst a people nurtured in these habits of self-reliance and self-government, that the ministers of the young monarch commenced experiments upon their patience, by requiring them to submit cheerfully to questionable as well as odious demands. After they discovered that they had been too sanguine, and that something more certain than the good-will of the governed was necessary to carry out their plan, first had come a few, gradually increased to some hundreds of soldiery, trained to war only with enemies of the state, whom timid official agents, enlisted in the task of establishing the unwelcome enactments, had begged as a protection in executing their work. Such an influence, too weak to subdue, proved strong enough to develop the evil passions which the earlier policy had engendered. It was not now as it had been on former occasions, when, though always supercilious in their bearing, the regulars had been joyfully hailed, by colonists, as friends and allies in the labor of subduing dangerous neighbors. That terror had passed away; but, in its place, had grown up something akin to it as respected

these friends themselves. The interests, once united, now began to look diverse. The presence of a British soldier was no longer the sign of an external enemy to be crushed. He could be needed only for one object, and what that was, it was becoming not difficult to conjecture. In case of a possible conflict of will with the mother country, it was clear that the unarmed hand would be driven to the wall. With these ideas, it was impossible that the presence even of a few soldiers should not excite uneasiness and displeasure. From being dignified as "His Majesty's regulars," they gradually degenerated, in the colonial vocabulary, into red-coats, lobsters, bullies, and outlaws hired abroad to cut off the chance of resistance to wrong. Every accidental occurrence furnished its aliment to the jealousy that had thus been roused; every personal quarrel or casual altercation in the streets became the symbol of impending tyranny. Thus had matters been going from bad to worse, until, on this very evening, whilst Lord North was assuring his friends that all would soon be harmony in America, an event occurred, suddenly revealing, in its full extent, the wide alienation of the colonial heart.

At about nine o'clock of the night on which Lord North declared himself impassible to menace, a single sentry was slowly pacing his walk before the door of the small custom-house in King Street, then, as ever since, the commercial centre of the town of Boston. It was moonlight, and a light coating of fresh snow had just been added to the surface of the ground, commonly covered at that time of the year with the condensed remnants of the winter's ice. There had been noise and commotion in the streets, particularly in Cornhill, now Washington Street, and at Murray's barracks, in what is now Brattle Street, where the twenty-ninth regiment was stationed. The passions of soldiers and town's people, which had been steadily rising, now found free vent in violent language and menacing gestures towards each other. Nothing remained to prevent a collision but the hesitation generally visible in crowds, as to who will venture the first stroke. The danger, however, had been avoided, through the energy of the officers, at the barracks, where it appeared the most imminent; and the probability is that it would have passed away, for this night at least, but for the intervention of one of those accidents which

set at naught the precautions even of the wisest. The sparks of social conflagrations are not infrequently found among the weakest and least regarded portions of the community. Sometimes they are boys, who, forever haunting scenes of popular excitement, reflect, in an exaggerated form, the passions of their elders, without comprehending the causes which roused them, or the necessity of keeping them under control. In this case, it was a barber's boy whose thoughtless impertinence opened the floodgates of passion in the town. The resentment of the sentinel and the complaints of the boy drew the attention of stragglers, on the watch for causes of offence, to the soldier's isolated condition, which soon brought his fears to the point of calling upon his comrades for support. A corporal and six men of the guard,[1] under the direction of Captain Preston, came to his relief, and ranged themselves in a semicircle in front of his post. The movement could not take place without exciting observation, the effect of which was the collection around them of forty or fifty of the lower order of town's people, who had been roving the streets armed with billets of wood until they began to gather around the main-guard, scarcely averse to the prospect of a quarrel. This small array of red-coats, separated from their companions, though it might have appeared formidable enough to deter them from a direct assault, hardly availed to dispel a temptation to resort to those less palpable, though quite as irritating, forms of annoyance, which are always at the command of every mob. What begins with jeering and profanity not seldom ends in some shape or other of deepest tragedy. Forty or fifty of the coarsest people of a small trading town and eight hirelings of an ordinary British regiment can scarcely be imagined as types of any solid principle or exalted sentiment, and yet at the bottom lay the root of bitterness which soon afterwards yielded such abundant fruit. This was the first protest against the application of force to the settlement of a question of right. This comparatively slight disturbance, going on by the peaceful light of the moon in a deserted street of an obscure town, was the solution of the problem which had been presented on the same night to the selected representatives of the nation, assembled in one of the ancient and populous and splendid capitals of the world.

[1] Captain Preston says twelve men, a singular instance of varying testimony.

Encouraged by impunity, the rioters proceeded from invective to defiance, and from defiance to the use of such missiles as the street afforded. Agitated as well by anger as by fear for their own safety, seven of the soldiers, either under orders or without orders, successively discharged their pieces upon their assailants. It is worthy of remark that every one of these shots took effect. Each musket was loaded with two balls. Five men fell mortally wounded, two of them receiving two balls each. Six more were wounded, one of whom, a gentleman, standing at his own door, observing the scene, received two balls in his arm. This accounts for all the balls.[1] So fatal a precision of aim, indicating not a little malignity, though it seems never to have attracted notice, is one of the most singular circumstances attending the affray. No wonder, then, that peaceable citizens of a town, until now inexperienced in events of the kind, should, in their horror of the spectacle, have called the act a massacre, and have demanded, in tones the most absolute, the instantaneous removal of the cause. The armed hand, which had done this deed, was that of England. It was not that of a friend or guardian. The drops of blood then shed in Boston were like the dragon's teeth of ancient fable — the seeds, from which sprung up the multitudes who would recognize no arbitration but the deadly one of the battle-field.

It was, indeed, an anxious night to most of the staid citizens of the town, who probably saw in it only the immediate annoyance to their peace. On the one side, various strollers, who had learned the issue of the conflict they had gone out to provoke, made its usually silent streets resound with the roll of drums and the cry to arms. "Town-born, turn out, turn out." On the other, a drummer from the main guard beat the alarm to the rest of the twenty-ninth regiment, to prepare them to defend their comrades as well as themselves. The several companies were rapidly formed and brought up from their quarters to the scene of conflict. The street, which had been almost empty, was now filling so fast, that the commanding officer, Captain Preston, had deemed it prudent to remove his men to the station of the main guard, opposite to the north side of the town-house, a place where the street was narrowest, and

[1] It is but right to add that other balls were found lodged in the houses opposite. See the Boston Narrative, deposition of Benj. Andrews, p. 151.

where the access from above and below could be most easily commanded. Here the regiment was drawn up in three lines, extending across the street, and facing towards the east, where it greatly widens, and where the crowd of town's people had gathered. The front rank was ordered to kneel, and the whole to be prepared to fire at the word of command. The other regiment, the fourteenth, though not ordered to the spot, was put under arms at its barracks, not far off, and made ready for action. Every thing portended a new and far more terrible conflict, when Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson, now acting as Governor, the very man who had been most active in procuring the presence of the troops, repaired to the scene to quell the storm he had raised. Once the most popular citizen of the place, even the change to the side of persecution, which had worked his official advancement, had not yet quite destroyed the force of old associations. His fellow-townsmen now looked to him for redress. He began by interrogating Captain Preston. But the noise was too great to permit of hearing the answer, and the impatient crowd pressed so hard upon the town-house as to force their way in, and carry the speaker with them up at once into the council-chamber. From this room a balcony opened upon the street, of which he took advantage to pledge himself to those outside that he would see justice done, and to exhort them, in that confidence, to go home, at least for the remainder of the night. At the same time, Lieutenant-colonel Carr, commanding the regiment, was advised to withdraw his men to their barracks. Their retirement was the signal for the somewhat reluctant dispersion of the crowd. The immediate hazard was over; yet, so great was the exasperation, that Hutchinson remained at the council-chamber a great part of the night in consultation with the commander of the troops, Lieutenant-colonel Dalrymple, whilst a court of justices of the peace forthwith set about taking testimony to ascertain the offenders. The result was the issue of process against Captain Preston. But it was not until after three o'clock the next morning that the intelligence of that officer's surrender of himself, and of his committal to prison, quieted the anxieties roused by this novel and painful agitation.

This was, however, only satisfaction for the past. It was no security for the future. That point came up for consideration

with the dawn of the next day. The lieutenant-governor had summoned the council at an early hour; but before it met, a number of the respectable and solid men of the town waited upon him to represent, in the strongest terms, the necessity of immediately removing the troops. At eleven o'clock, Faneuil Hall filled with people rushing to a meeting called to hear from eye-witnesses what they could tell of the affray. The distorted and impassioned narrations given only stirred their indignation still more against the whole military array, to which they gave vent by unanimously instructing a committee of fifteen, with John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and Joseph Warren of the number, to go to the governor and council with their deliberate opinion that it was impossible for the soldiers and the town's people to live longer with safety together. Conscious of the drift of his own letters to Great Britain, which had brought in the troops to overawe the spirit of liberty in the town, and yet without courage openly to brave so strong a popular excitement, Hutchinson fell upon the device, not uncommon with men of his stamp, of shifting the burden from his shoulders. Not venturing to dispute the reasonableness of the application, he evaded it by pleading want of authority over the king's forces. The effect was to throw upon Colonel Dalrymple, then senior in command, the responsibility for all the disastrous effects that might follow a refusal, whilst it yielded him no support from authority to justify his consent. That officer, very naturally, sought to escape a position so perilous. He at once offered to remove the most obnoxious regiment to the castle, at least until the arrival of orders from the commander-in-chief at New York, provided the governor and council would approve it. But that was more than Hutchinson was prepared to do. With his mind still fixed upon the tenor of his letters then under the eyes of ministers at home, he could not bring himself to an admission so mortifying to his sagacity. He answered the committee only by acquiescing in Dalrymple's offer, and rose for the purpose of breaking up the council. But that body, who probably suspected little of what was going on within his breast, and whose sympathies not less than their fears prompted union with their fellow-citizens, quailed under the trial to which he was subjecting them. They joined with the colonel in begging for an adjourn-

ment till afternoon, with such earnestness that they extorted rather than received consent.

During the interval, on the one hand, Dalrymple gave the council to understand that he would venture to act without an order, if the executive would only express "a desire" that he should, and, on the other, the committee of fifteen reported to the town meeting, now so much reinforced in numbers that it had been transferred to the largest edifice in the town, the Old South meeting-house, the answer to their application. Stimulated rather than disheartened, a new motion was carried to send back seven of the committee, fortified by a second unanimous declaration from the increased thousands there assembled, that nothing would satisfy them but the removal of *all* the troops. It is the scene of the afternoon session of the governor and council, when the smaller committee appeared to reiterate the popular demands, which John Adams, in a letter to Judge Tudor, late in life, so vividly delineated. There was Hutchinson, with the words still on his memory, which he had secretly penned and sent to England only the year before, "five or six men-of-war and three or four regiments disturb nobody but some of our grave people, who do not love assemblies and concerts, and cannot bear the noise of drums upon a Sunday;" how was he to stultify himself by the act of ordering away a much smaller force? There were the council, in the morning, divided in sentiment, a part yet anxious, if possible, to follow their chief, now so hemmed in by the conjoint cries of the whole community around them, as to have become unanimous for concession; the ever faithful secretary, too, the captain of one of the frigates in the harbor, and the commanding officers of both regiments, all honestly anxious to escape the ominous alternative which seemed to impend over a perseverance in refusal, joined in their solicitations that he would give way. Hutchinson was left alone. Their former idol was now to encounter the risk of the bitter curses of his townsmen, should blood be again shed in their streets by reason of his obstinacy. The trial was too great for his nerves. Again he returned to his expedient, and pleaded the want of power. The device only served the more to discomfit its contriver. The stern logic of Samuel Adams at once removed the obstacle already half demolished. "If the power existed to remove the twenty-ninth,

it was equally able to remove the fourteenth, and a refusal to do both would be at their peril." The law of physical strength was broken; the moral victory won. The rod of oppression, which Hutchinson had been secretly and cunningly preparing, snapped in his hand.

But not satisfied with this triumph, the passions of the people took another direction. From the partial evidence thus far given in, it appeared as if this had been a cruel, wanton massacre of innocent and unoffending citizens. Hence it followed that the perpetrators of this crime should be visited with the extreme penalty of the law. The captain who had ordered and the seven soldiers who fired the fatal shots, should meet with condign punishment. They were oppressors, bullies, hireling cut-throats. The slain were martyrs in the cause of liberty. A prodigious concourse attended the ceremony of their interment, and measures were taken to keep alive the popular passions, by the establishment of an annual commemoration of the tragic event. The current thus setting towards the final condemnation of the prisoners was so strong as to bid fair to overawe justice even in the highest tribunal of the State. In the deep-wrought feeling of the moment, to doubt the truth of the wildest charge which malignity or folly could invent, was regarded as equivalent to siding with the tyrant minister who had caused the massacre. Thus it happened that the soldiers were considered, by most persons, as having acted from deep-settled malice aforethought, with the intent to kill, maim, or injure unoffending people against whom they entertained a personal hate. The superior court, before which they were to be brought for trial, happened to be commencing its term the next week. The judges, sensible of the injustice to the prisoners of entering upon the case in the midst of so great an excitement, at first determined to postpone the trial until the first week in June. But overawed by the attendance of a large committee, with Samuel Adams and Joseph Warren at their head, appointed by the town to watch the prosecution, they rescinded their decision, and at once named a day, to which they adjourned the court. Such, at least, is the statement of Hutchinson, who is seldom inaccurate.[1] Yet the fact is certain that the actual day of trial did not come on for more than seven months.

[1] *History*, vol. iii. p. 286, also his letter in the *Remembrancer* for 1775, p. 41.

In the general disgust, at the introduction of troops into the town, John Adams had largely shared. Only the May before this event, at the head of a committee of his fellow-citizens, he had prepared the instructions for their representatives to the General Court, in which these words occur. "It will be natural to inquire into all the grievances we have suffered from the military power; why they have been quartered on the body of the town, in contradiction to the express words, and, as we conceive, the manifest intention of an act of Parliament; why the officers who have thus violated our rights have not been called to an account, and dealt with as the law required .... why the repeated offences and violence committed by the soldiery against the peace, and in open defiance and contempt of the civil magistrate and the law, have escaped punishment in the courts of justice." Entertaining such dispositions, whilst he could not concur with the extreme views of the cause of the riot taken by his fellow-townsmen, nothing was further from his thought than the idea of being called to confront their passions. This, however, was to be the first occasion to test the firmness of his principles, by placing them between the forces now hastening to collision. Notwithstanding the guarded language of Hutchinson, it may be safely inferred from his account, that the course taken to aid Captain Preston was suggested by him. Presaging the contingency in which he might be summoned, in the last resort, to breast the popular storm, by giving a pardon after conviction, it was not unlike him to contrive a plan to thrust in leading professional men of the patriot side between himself and the danger he apprehended. Neither is it any cause of surprise to find him relying upon pecuniary considerations, as an inducement to the assumption of so uninviting a duty. No such ideas seem, however, to have weighed a feather with the persons to whom Preston and the others had recourse. Of the few lawyers known to be warmly engaged against the government policy, John Adams and Josiah Quincy, junior, were now, by all odds, the most prominent in Boston. The former had been at the bar twelve years. The latter, the junior of Mr. Adams by nine years, had, however, in his shorter service, succeeded in gaining credit with his fellow-citizens as well for his professional skill as for his personal character.

To them the prisoners applied. Timid or crafty men would have devised excuses to avoid the duty. They were not of either class. Mr. Adams framed his answer solely upon professional grounds, for thus far he had never ceased to regard his life as that of a lawyer only. A riot had no necessary connection, in his mind, with the maintenance of his political principles. It was enough that the applicants had reasonable grounds of justification, and had called for assistance, for him to determine that it should not be withheld. Mr. Quincy, on his part, acted with not less promptness, though not without mature consultation with judicious friends more advanced in years, as became so young a man. Of this number was Mr. Adams himself, with whose advice he consented to engage.[1] The decision was regarded by many townsmen as little short of a wilful design to screen murderers from justice. The father of Quincy wrote to his son in terms of vehement remonstrance. The son's reply is in the vein which so often raises the annals of these times above the ordinary level of history. "To inquire my duty, and to do it, is my aim," he wrote, and with that moral second sight which sometimes reflects the light of future generations back upon the mind of one yet living in the midst of doubts and difficulties, he added: "I dare affirm that you and *this whole people* will one day rejoice that I became an advocate for the aforesaid criminals, charged with the murder of our fellow-citizens."

Yet, though there can be little uncertainty of the nature of the popular feeling at this time, it would not be just to represent the town so carried away by passion as to leave none of the citizens conscious that the question was not without difficulty on its merits. In the same letter, Mr. Quincy names Hancock, Molineux, Cushing, Warren, Pemberton, and Cooper, than whom there were no warmer patriots in Boston, as approving what he had done. Captain Preston publicly acknowledged, in the newspapers, his obligations for the sympathy he had met with in his adversity. And an occasion happened a few weeks later for the people to show that the determination of Mr.

[1] "I refused an engagement, until advised and urged to undertake it by an Adams," &c. This is the language of Mr. Quincy's letter. To ascribe such advice to Samuel Adams, in view of his known convictions respecting the soldiers, scarcely does him credit either as a friend or a citizen.

Adams to defend the prisoners had in no way impaired their confidence in his principles. James Otis, junior, the fiery and daring pioneer, whose will, however fitfully exerted, had yet done wonders in concentrating the opinions of the colony, was now reluctantly admitted to be past further service. In the place which he had held so long, James Bowdoin had been substituted, at the annual representative election held in May. But, on the assembling of the General Court, it appeared that the accession of Hutchinson to the place of Bernard, had been the signal for some variation of policy. Mr. Bowdoin was no longer excluded from the council by the exercise of the governor's negative, as he had been. As a consequence of this transfer to the other branch, a vacancy was created in the House of Representatives, to fill which a precept was issued to the town of Boston. A special election was held on the 6th of June, just three months after the riot in King Street, and Mr. Adams was chosen by four hundred and eighteen out of five hundred and thirty-six votes.

In his "Autobiography," Mr. Adams has described his feelings upon this occasion too clearly to need further exposition. His words are remarkable, as indicating that he considered his act of accepting this post to be the first material departure from his preconceived plan of life.[1] Up to this moment he had labored, as few men of his day labored, to make himself a distinguished lawyer. After years of dogged perseverance, he had at last reached a station in the front rank. Business, which had fluctuated in the season of the Stamp Act, now came in steadily and abundantly, promising, ere long, to reward him with what, in the simple New England habits of those days, might be reckoned a handsome independence. Although led alike by his principles and his feelings to engage in public questions, it is a great mistake to suppose him to have participated in the counsels or the action of the patriots at this time, at all in the manner customary with his older kinsman, Samuel Adams. Unlike him, John never attended town meetings, nor did he mix much in the private assemblages or clubs which gave shape and direction to the public counsels. The faculty of combining the sentiments of numbers into some definite

[1] Vol. ii. p. 232.

form of action, which particularly distinguishes party leaders, belonged, in a high degree, to Samuel, but it was never either possessed or prized by John. This distinction, which has not infrequently been overlooked, it is of some importance to keep in mind. It was not as a politician, but as a lawyer, that John Adams was first drawn into public life. The patriotic party stood in need of a legal adviser at all times, but never more than now, that they were summoned to contend with the shrewdness and the skill of Hutchinson, just transferred from the highest judicial to the highest civil post of the province. From the rise of the troubles, as a general thing, the lawyers, following the natural instincts of their profession, had either studiously remained neutral, or had leaned, decidedly, to the side of prerogative. Oxenbridge Thacher, the first exception, had now been dead several years. Otis, long an energetic, though not uniformly a consistent counsellor, had just sunk, a victim to his own irregularities and the vindictiveness of his enemies. Joseph Hawley, the pillar of the party in western Massachusetts, was not at all times at hand, nor did his temperament, ever prone to melancholy, incline him to assume undivided responsibility. Both he and Samuel Adams saw in John Adams the person now wanted to step into the vacant place. Neither is it unlikely that a fear of possible influences upon the mind of the latter, from the relations formed in the course of Preston's trial, may have prompted the plan of fixing upon him, without further loss of time, some sort of political obligation. Be this as it may, the fact is certain that, from this date, whether in or out of public station, John Adams was looked to as a guide in those measures in which questions involving professional knowledge were to be discussed with the authorities representing the crown.

The sessions of the General Court for 1770 were not among the most memorable of this preparatory period. Yet they show clearly enough, at every step, the onward march of revolution. Trifles, which in ordinary times would have been passed over without notice, now produced irritation, and that bred contention with Hutchinson, who stood as the mark for every attack. The court had been summoned to meet at Cambridge, instead of Boston, for the sake of punishing the contumacy of the latter town. The change, in those days

without bridges over the Charles River, was inconvenient to all, whilst it served rather to provoke than to frighten those whom it was designed to affect. It was made by Hutchinson himself, for the ministry had left him a discretion to act as he thought best. The process of reasoning which decided him, has been exposed to the world.[1] It is quite characteristic of the man. His unconciliatory spirit very naturally bred its like in the opposition, and the consequence was an almost endless dispute. If it be conceded that he ultimately proved his act of transfer to be legal, the question will yet recur whether more was not lost by the contention than victory was worth. Just so was it with another and a more subtle question that succeeded, touching the enacting style used in the provincial laws. Somewhere about 1740, Colonel Bladen, a member of the board of trade and plantations, had seen, in the form then practised, beginning, "Be it enacted by the Governor, Council, and House of Representatives *in General Court assembled, and by authority of the same*," words of fear to the prerogative of the monarch of Great Britain. So he obtained an order, to be placed in the standing instructions of the governor, that the ominous terms should henceforward no longer appear. And they had been accordingly disused until now, when the House had revived them.

Governor Hutchinson called their attention to his instructions as forbidding the variation. The House proceeded to argue the case. There can be little doubt that in their management of both these questions the House greatly relied upon the advice of Mr. Adams. Hutchinson, in his account, dwells upon their trifling nature, as if the blame of raising them rested exclusively with his opponents. But if so trifling, the question naturally arises why he gave them such prominence by his mode of dealing with them. And a solution is afforded by the knowledge of the fact that he was using the positions assumed by the House as an argument with ministers, for taking steps to annul the charter itself. This explains the reason why he invited so many disputes, and showed so little desire of conciliating his opponents, in carrying them on. So long as they

[1] "There will be inconveniences either way; but I have the opinion of the ministry in favor of the one side, which outweighs, with me, the opinion of such as dislike the measure here."

Letter to Lord Hillsborough, Almon's *Remembrancer* for 1775, p. 46.

furnished him the means of ingratiating himself at home, and of recommending the arbitrary policy upon the success of which he desired to stake his fortunes, he was content. For the rest, he rather enjoyed the little vexations to which he had it in his power to subject his enemies. He alludes to the futile efforts of the selectmen of Boston to keep up the usual ceremonies of election day, in spite of the removal of the General Court, very much as a pedagogue would gloat on the inability of a refractory scholar to conceal the pain his chastisement gave, and not as a philosopher who traces great events to minute causes. Frivolous as might be the origin of many differences that took place, they all had their share in bringing on the great catastrophe. A sudden and violent quarrel seldom breeds permanent division between friends. Anger and love are not incompatible passions, and they often succeed each other with equal violence in the same breast. But the slow and gradual wear and tear of irritations often recurring upon trivial matters, by associating a sense of relief with the idea of separation, is what most surely leads to irrevocable alienation. Such was the natural effect of the strife excited and continued by Bernard and Hutchinson. It was they who taught the people of Massachusetts to feel as if no peace would be found in their household so long as Great Britain had it in her power to protect the instigators of the annoyances not less than the injuries to which they were perpetually exposed.

In all these discussions, Mr. Adams, although entirely a novice in legislation, was at once called to take an active part. His name appears upon almost every important committee, and his turn of thought, as well as his technical skill, is to be traced in many of the controversial papers of the session. This was a school in which he was forming himself for the struggles of the future both in the province itself and afterwards upon a wider theatre. Among the committees alluded to there are two, which, for particular reasons, deserve to be specially mentioned. One was directed to mature a plan for the encouragement of arts, agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, to be reported at the next session. The other was organized to correspond with the agent and others in Great Britain, and also with the speakers of the several assemblies or the committees of correspondence of the other colonies. It does not appear that

much was done that year in prosecution of either object, and Mr. Adams retired from the House at its close. But the latter, however imperfectly it may have been carried into execution, certainly shows the first proposal of the kind during the struggle — a fact which has been overlooked by Mr. Jefferson, and by later writers following his authority, who have ascribed the paternity of the suggestion to the assembly of Virginia.

In the midst of the dispute about the enacting style, came on the trial of Captain Preston, which called Mr. Adams away to another scene. It was commenced the 24th and lasted until the 30th of October. No report of it was ever published. The favorable verdict was not unexpected, for it was scarcely possible to prove that he had given any orders which caused the men to fire. The other and more difficult case followed a month later; and so great was the interest felt in it that a stenographer undertook, what in that day was a gigantic task, a report in full. Unlike the indefatigable men of the same class in this age, he gave way, completely exhausted, before he reached the end. The published report, confessedly imperfect, makes a volume of more than two hundred closely printed pages. It is better in every part than in the arguments of the counsel for the defence, a deficiency which Mr. Adams, for his own share, has thus explained. When the notes were submitted to him for revision, he perceived so many misconceptions of his meaning, as to make the manuscript difficult to correct without rewriting the whole. Having no leisure for such a task, he preferred to strike out the greater part, and substitute a mere list of the legal authorities upon which his argument rested. There is, therefore, no record remaining of his real speech. A small part only of these original notes has been preserved, and that is remarkable only for one attempt at correction, which will be noticed in its proper place.

The most favorable circumstances for the eight soldiers subjected to this trial were just those which seemed most to threaten at the outset. A "Narrative," prepared by a committee of the town upon the *ex parte* testimony of heated individuals, taken at the moment, had been printed and quite extensively circulated both in England and America, which seemed to justify the notion that the prisoners, in their action on that night towards the people of the town, had been actuated

by purely malicious intentions. The evidence given in on the trial, after the lapse of several months, and subjected to the tests usual in courts of law, put a different face on the matter. So far from being in any way assailants in the affray, it was shown that much provocation had been given by the town's people, both in word and deed. So far from promptly resorting to arms, it admitted, at least, of doubt, whether any resource was left to save their lives when they fired. Much of the testimony in the "Narrative" now looked extravagant, and some was positively perjured. The alleged firing from the windows of the custom-house turned out to be fiction. Hence had sprung up a partial reaction in the popular judgment. This had been skilfully improved by Mr. Quincy, in his opening, so that when Mr. Adams's turn came to close the defence, he had little left to do beyond a clear recapitulation of the principles of the common law in cases of homicide, to complete the case. In mere rhetorical declamation, his mind was too direct and his character too downright to take pleasure, in any part of his life. His natural energy carried him at once to the main subject; but when that was grasped with firmness, he delighted in placing it in every light of which it was susceptible. His desire was to convince the jury that the act done was not murder; but in order to effect it, he carefully confined himself to a pure appeal to their reason. His exordium and his peroration each consisted of a brief quotation, not inaptly introduced to justify his peculiar situation. In his "Diary," months before, in connection with cases of successful defence made by him,[1] a passage is noted from a celebrated work then quite new, which he now introduced, with great effect, to shield himself with the sympathy of the assembly around him. He began thus: —

"May it please your Honors, and you gentlemen of the Jury, —

"I am for the prisoners at the bar; and shall apologize for it only in the words of the Marquis Beccaria: 'If I can but be the instrument of preserving one life, his blessing and tears of transport shall be a sufficient consolation to me for the contempt of mankind.'"

Individuals who heard Mr. Adams, carried with them to the end of their lives a most vivid recollection of the thrill which

[1] Vol. ii. p. 238.

spread through the auditory upon the repetition of these few and simple words.[1] The mysterious chain of human sympathy is not unfrequently electrified the most with the least artificial preparation. It was always so with Mr. Adams as an orator, whose rhetorical effects were never any thing but the legitimate offspring of his own strongly excited emotions. Probably no ornament which he could have woven into his speech, would have had one half the effect either upon the jury or the audience, that was produced by the conviction inspired that his heart and his head were equally engaged in the duty he had assumed.

Content with this laconic introduction, the speaker at once addressed himself to the task of explaining the law which should govern the case. He enlarged upon the principles applied to the discrimination of human conduct, and, particularly, in all the various forms in which men do mortal harm to one another. This brought him gradually and naturally to the consideration of cases of homicide occurring in the course of self-defence, and to the rules of interpreting motives which the wisdom of judicial tribunals has cautiously educed from an extended survey of the reciprocal obligations of mankind. At every step he was careful to avoid resting upon affirmations of his own, rather preferring to reinforce his argument by a constant appeal to the power of authority over the minds of the jury. "I have endeavored," he said, "to produce the best authorities, and to give you the rules of law in their words; for I desire not to advance any thing of my own. I choose to lay down the rules of law from authorities which cannot be disputed." From this he passed to an explanation of the nature and various forms of provocation to injury, with which portion of his subject the argument of the first day was concluded. This formed the doctrinal part of the speech. The next day was devoted to an application of the principles thus laid down to the strongest parts of the evidence that had been elicited in the course of the examination. It is at the outset of this review that the single corrected passage of the reporter's notes occurs, which has been already alluded to. It is plain from it that the prescient mind of the orator was already floating far over the ocean of the future, watching, not without dismay, the signs of

[1] National Portrait Gallery. Article: John Adams, p. 11.

tempest that were accumulating around the horizon. The words are these: —

"If Heaven, in its anger, shall ever permit the time to come when, by means of an abandoned administration at home, and the outrages of the soldiery here, the bond of parental affection and filial duty between Britain and the colonies shall be dissolved, when we shall be shaken loose from the shackles of the common law and our allegiance, and reduced to a state of nature, the American and British soldier must fight it out upon the principles of the law of nature and of nations. But it is certain such a time is not yet arrived, and every virtuous Briton and American prays it never may. Till then, however, we must try causes in the tribunals of justice, by the law of the land."

After an elaborate analysis of the testimony, as given in the order of the witnesses, Mr. Adams then came to his conclusion in the same simple, straight-forward, and passionless style in which he had commenced: —

"Facts are stubborn things," said he, "and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence. Nor is the law less stable than the fact. If an assault was made to endanger their lives, the law is clear; they had a right to kill in their own defence. If it was not so severe as to endanger their lives, yet if they were assaulted at all, struck and abused by blows of any sort, by snowballs, oyster-shells, cinders, clubs, or sticks of any kind, this was a provocation, for which the law reduces the offence of killing down to manslaughter, in consideration of those passions in our nature which cannot be eradicated.

"To your candor and justice I submit the prisoners and their cause. The law, in all vicissitudes of government, fluctuations of the passions, or flights of enthusiasm, will preserve a steady undeviating course. It will not bend to the uncertain wishes, imaginations, and wanton tempers of men. To use the words of a great and worthy man, a patriot and a hero, an enlightened friend of mankind, and a martyr to liberty, I mean Algernon Sidney, who, from his earliest infancy, sought a tranquil retirement under the shadow of the tree of liberty with his tongue, his pen, and his sword: —

"'The law no passion can disturb. 'Tis void of desire and fear, lust and anger. 'Tis *mens sine affectu*, written reason, retaining some measure of the divine perfection. It does not enjoin that which pleases a weak, frail man, but, without any regard to persons, commends that which is good, and punishes evil in all, whether rich or poor, high or low. 'Tis deaf, inexorable, inflexible. On the one hand, it is inexorable to the cries and lamentations of the prisoner; on the other, it is deaf, deaf as an adder, to the clamors of the populace.'"

In the perfect simplicity of this argument lay its greatest power over the minds of a people, who, however attached to liberty, had inherited, from their ancestors on both sides of the water, scrupulous veneration for the sacredness of law. All the series of hateful measures which had led to the catastrophe, the coarseness and occasional arrogance of the soldiers themselves in their relations with the town's people, had been carefully kept in the background; and the single image of justice, clothed in all her sternness, and yet pure and divested of human passion, had been put forward and relied upon to determine the issue. The calculation was not a mistaken one. Each of the four judges who sat in the case, not disinclined to mercy, but fearful of the popular indignation if he indulged it, encouraged by the impression made by the defence, delivered his charge strongly in favor of the prisoners. The jury remained out about two hours and a half. On their return they acquitted six of the eight soldiers, against whom no specific act had been proved. They were, accordingly, discharged. The other two, Killroy and Montgomery, against whom, as having caused the death of Attucks and Gray, the evidence most strongly pointed, were found guilty of manslaughter. They immediately prayed for the benefit of clergy, according to the old forms of the English law, which was at once granted; and having been publicly burnt in the hand, agreeably to the sentence pronounced by the court, they were, likewise, suffered to depart. Could the same facts have been proved on their companions, they would have fared no worse. The idea of malicious intent was in either event entirely precluded.

Thus ended the first and the lightest of the four moral tests which occurred in the course of Mr. Adams's public life. The prisoners had not been compelled to throw themselves upon

executive clemency, and Hutchinson was relieved. The town was released from danger of censure for vindictive ferocity, and the people, though not universally convinced that the verdict was according to law and testimony, had ceased to be in a temper to obstruct its operation. Mr. Adams had borne himself so manfully, that whilst he gained a great addition to his professional reputation, he lost little of the esteem of his political friends. Gordon, the historian, affirms that his argument had the effect of altering their policy. No longer giving countenance to petty and profitless brawls with straggling soldiers, they turned their attention to improving the organization of the local militia, as a means of defence, against the uses to which they might, as troops, be put. However this may have been, Mr. Adams never looked back upon his share in this transaction without satisfaction, not only because he had himself performed what he believed his duty, in the face of popular clamor, but because he had done his part to furnish for Boston a memorable example of self-control under extraordinary provocation, as well as of cheerful submission to the ultimate decree of law. Of how much value this has been as well to the town as the whole country, in the opinion of the world, and not simply whilst the friends of prerogative were straining every nerve to excite a contrary impression, but ever since, it is only necessary to open any account purporting to be a history of these times, fully to understand.

The year had been one of great labor; and the sedentary habits incident to a town residence, to which Mr. Adams was not used, began to threaten his health. His profession was yet the exclusive object of regard. He determined at once to bid adieu to politics, and sacrifice his position as a representative of Boston, by returning to the rural life of his native place. For himself, this decision seems to have cost him not a particle of hesitation; but as to the public, his feelings were more in conflict with his judgment. His "Diary," for the two following years, betrays the state of his mind, vacillating between his devotion to his profession and his anxiety at the increasing embarrassments of the popular cause. The great struggle between authority and liberty, prerogative and principle, was not going on without frequent symptoms of varying fortune. The dispute with Hutchinson about holding the General Court

at Cambridge had, unluckily, sowed the seeds of discord in the patriot ranks. Samuel Adams and John Hancock were no longer friends, and their difference spread a spirit of animosity among their respective followers. Encouraged by this strife, the friends of government once more rallied in Boston in the hope of defeating the reëlection of Samuel Adams to the House. And though in this attempt they signally failed, the softened tone of Hancock kept up their spirits with an expectation that his influence at least might soon be expected to turn on their side. Neither was this altogether without reason, as Hancock gave many signs of discontent with the cause of the patriots, one of which consisted in the transfer of his legal business from the hands of John Adams, whom he had employed for some years, into those of Samuel Quincy, well known as the solicitor general, and on the side of the crown. Hutchinson's interesting narrative, as well as his confidential correspondence, clearly shows the hopes which he at this time cherished of yet establishing his system and himself in the teeth of all opposition, whilst, on the other hand, Mr. Adams's "Diary" displays the apprehensions entertained by the patriots of his success. There is no knowing how far he might have prevailed, had not his own imprudence contributed the means wherewith to dash all his devices. The detection of his secret letters healed at once all the dissensions, for it showed him to the colonists exactly what he was. It left no shadow of doubt of the source of the crafty policy through which their chartered rights were in danger of being annulled, and the executive and legislative departments withdrawn from their sphere of influence, and subjected exclusively to that of the crown. This end could not be attained so long as the pecuniary support of the officers continued in any way dependent upon the good-will of the colonial representatives. To suppose that the judges, men raised from among themselves, would be induced to uphold any odious system of arbitrary measures, so long as their salaries continued at their mercy, was scarcely consistent with reason or experience. Nobody knew this better than Hutchinson, and that if any thing was to be gained to the side of power, it was to be through an enlargement of the means of dispensing favors, to command which the government at home must be made henceforward the exclusive source from which they

should flow. It was in the prosecution of this idea that the project had been set on foot by him of furnishing a salary, first for the governor, and afterwards for the justices of the superior court, from the crown. And its execution had gone on so far to success in the former case as to render the prospect of it in the latter by no means unlikely. As a consequence of the exposition made of this aggressive spirit in the secret letters, the contest assumed, in 1773, a new and more vehement form.

But it was the rumor that the judges might soon be taken into the pay of the crown, that spread incomparably the greatest alarm in the hearts of the patriots. If this should be accomplished, the greatest barrier to Hutchinson's schemes would be forever removed. The committee of correspondence in Boston had early sounded the note of remonstrance, which was soon echoed far and wide from the smaller towns. That on a dependent bench servility was sure to become the rule and manliness the exception, was a lesson too freshly received from the annals of the Stuart reigns to be yet obliterated in America. Neither had the tendencies of the legal profession, with certain marked exceptions, in Massachusetts, been altogether such as to correct these early impressions. An instance presented itself at Cambridge, where lived William Brattle, a man of respectable character and extended influence, once a declared opponent of the Stamp Act, now soothed by the narcotics of Hutchinson to a state, at best, of suspicious apathy. At a town meeting, where the majority of the people had voted instructions to their representative to exert himself to the utmost against the proposed change, Brattle ventured publicly to advocate it. His defence was ingenious and plausible. He maintained that it would insure a greater independence of the judges from all exterior influences whatsoever. But in order to make good his argument, he was obliged to assume that the tenure of their offices was during good behavior. Granting this, his conclusion was sound, that the effect would be only to make them more at liberty from control alike of sovereign and of subject. This assumption was not inconsistent with the general opinion. It was further fortified in this instance by a challenge to the lawyers of the patriotic side in general, and *to John Adams in particular*, to uphold the contrary.

This speech came to Mr. Adams's ears, and it had an in-

stantaneous effect. "My own determination," he says in his "Diary," "had been to decline all invitations to public affairs and inquiries. But Brattle's rude, indecent, and unmeaning challenge of me in particular, laid me under peculiar obligations to undeceive the people, and changed my resolution. I hope that some good will grow out of it. God knows." The consequence was the production of a series of papers in the columns of the "Boston Gazette," during the early part of 1773, which are inserted in the third volume of the present collection. They will be found to abound in professional learning, which soon closed the mouth of his antagonist, a man little able, in other respects, to cope with him in controversy. They have now, comparatively, little interest. But at the time, they served the purpose of establishing in the popular mind two propositions. The first, the importance of assuring the independence of the judges of all temporary extraneous influences, by making them hold office during good behavior; the second, that no such tenure had ever actually existed in Massachusetts. Hence, should the payment of their salaries be taken from the colony, the control of the crown over them would become exclusive and complete. The demonstration so ably made in these papers had its desired effect. It was not without force on public opinion, and even upon Hutchinson himself. For he not long afterwards wrote to government at home, urging that all uneasiness on this score should be quieted by consenting to establish the tenure during good behavior.

But it was not this controversy alone which counteracted Mr. Adams's designs of retirement. Almost at the same moment, the voluntary act of the governor created a strong demand for the precise order of qualifications which he, more than any other man in the province, at that time possessed. Roused by the tightening network of organization woven around him by the indefatigable assiduity of Samuel Adams, in the committees of correspondence, as well as by the doctrines given out by the same person from the centre in Boston, unequivocally denying the supreme authority of parliament over the colonies in all cases whatsoever, Hutchinson boldly determined himself to go in advance of the attack, by presenting to the General Court, at its opening in 1773, an elaborate argument to sustain it. This, he thought, it would be beyond the power of his oppo-

nents satisfactorily to answer; and if not so answered, he relied upon the fact to produce an extensive reaction in the public feeling. Neither was it out of his mind that his former judicial station, which he had only left to become governor, would be of material service to clothe with authority the positions which he should take. Laying aside all the ordinary topics of an annual address, he opened at once upon the consideration of the *cause* of the disordered state of the province. He affirmed it to be the late denial, for the first time, of the supreme authority of Parliament. For his part, he could see no medium between the admission of that authority and the independence of the colony. In every state, but one supreme power could be found. In the present instance, it was either in America or it was in Great Britain. If it was in America, what claim had Massachusetts upon Great Britain for protection? And what would be its prospect, but for that protection, of maintaining its independence of other powers? But protection on the one hand implied obedience on the other. By the law of nations, the principle had been established that the colonies emanating from a state did not cease thereby to be a part of that state. Yet although subordinate, they might enjoy powers more or less extended of their own. Particularly was this possible under the institutions of Great Britain, the free spirit of which infused itself into those of all its dependencies. But however ample these powers, it was obvious that they could never be exclusive. The greatest of them, for example, that of legislation, must be controlled by the higher jurisdiction exercised by Parliament, in all matters touching the common interest which were applicable to them.

But if it should be objected to this reasoning that, by express compact between Great Britain and Massachusetts, the people of the latter were guaranteed the same rights and privileges of Englishmen which they would have enjoyed had they remained at home, the question would arise what were those rights and privileges. It could be demonstrated that they were not everywhere the same, not even in all parts of England itself. Adroitly substituting the general idea of natural rights for the specific rights of which he had been treating, the governor went on to show that even representation was an abridgment of these, yet that a complaint on account of such abridgment would be an

objection not to any particular form, but to government itself. Just so was it with the English colonist, whose voluntary removal from that sphere in which alone he could exercise the rights and privileges guaranteed to Englishmen, necessarily placed him on an inequality with his brethren at home. The charter secured him only the partial rights it was practicable for him to enjoy where he was, whilst it saved him the opportunity of resuming the enjoyment of them in their full extent whenever he should incline to return to Great Britain, where it could be done.

Such is the substance of this somewhat celebrated paper, intended by its author to place the cause of Britain upon an immovable base; a paper, the argument of which, he himself affirms, met with the hearty approbation of one who rose to be lord-chancellor, Thurlow, at the time, and which has been declared unanswerable by better legal and political authority[1] at this day. Yet it would not seem quite impossible to trace serious defects in this much vaunted foundation. Is it so essential to the construction of any social system that the idea of absolute, supreme authority, resting in it somewhere, should be assumed to be necessary at all? Supreme power, obtaining obedience without qualification, can be acknowledged only in association with the conception of absolute excellence which can command no wrong. The ideas are united in the notion of the Supreme Being, the creator and preserver of all things, but not in any common form of humanity, as experience has taught us to know it on earth. Authority which proves not to be limited by justice and right reason, which is enlisted to the end of inflicting evil upon any portion of the human race, has no basis to rest upon beyond the physical force adequate to enforce its decrees. And this physical force, when purely aggressive in action, being out of the pale of mere moral considerations, is not susceptible of any argument in justification of its use. It is a fact in dynamics, and nothing more. "Bad laws," said Burke of his own country, Great Britain, "are the worst sort of tyranny. In such a country as this, they are of all bad things the worst; worse, by far, than anywhere else; and they derive a particular malignity even from the wisdom

[1] Lord Campbell. At least, he says that *he* cannot answer it. The quotation is from recollection of his sprightly yet learned biographical work.

and soundness of the rest of our institutions." There can be little security to private rights in any form of social organization, and least of all in those of the most popular kind, where the axiom is not well established in the general mind that all shapes which power may be made to assume, from the greatest to the least, are not only limitable, but limited to the purposes for which they were especially created.

Assuming this proposition to be sound, the dilemma so confidently offered by the governor is at once avoided. It would have been quite as easy at any time to reconcile the powers vested in the government of Great Britain with those appropriate to the colonial legislatures, as it has since proved to be with analogous powers under the federal and the state governments of the United States. Neither would that officer have been driven, under such a hypothesis, to the deplorable necessity of surmounting the obstacle presented in the chartered guarantee of the rights of Englishmen to men removing from England, by advancing the absurdity that this guarantee applied only in cases of return to the place where no grant was necessary to secure them.

But though this speech was not without its defects, as well in moral as political reasoning, it so far fell in with established ideas, and seemed to rest on so confident a claim of authority, as to render the party in opposition not a little uneasy under the pressure. Hutchinson affirms that measures were instantly taken by the committee of the House charged with the duty of reply, to obtain the aid of those persons in the other colonies who had most distinguished themselves in the former controversy on the validity of the Stamp Act. Both Mr. Dulany, of Maryland, and John Dickinson, of Pennsylvania, are said to have been applied to, and to have declined to engage. This statement rests upon the authority of a single individual, and may fairly be doubted. At any rate, they did not act. Yet the fact is certain that an unusual delay took place in reporting an answer, and that, when it came, it furnished proofs of great labor in the preparation. Unlike most of the papers of the kind, it grappled at once with first principles. It disputed the right, thus far generally conceded in Christendom, of seizing the lands occupied by the heathen, by virtue of authority vested in the head of the Catholic Church, and granting them to any

Christian monarch whose subjects might be the first to discover them. But should that title be conceded to be valid, it was one which vested in the sovereign, who, in the present instance, had voluntarily entered into an agreement with certain persons among his subjects, clothing them with powers to enter upon new countries not annexed to the realm of England, and subjecting them to restrictions specified on the face of the compact. The question was then no longer one of natural rights, but of liberties proper to those free and natural subjects of Great Britain, who, under the protection of this grant, had come to America, had compounded with the natives for their lands, and had gone on to do all the acts necessary to constitute themselves a state. Among other things, they had undertaken to make laws for their own government, subject, however, to the only condition attached to their contract, that they should be in no wise repugnant to the laws of England. In other words, they had guarded against a conflict between their own legislation and that body of jurisprudence, under the fundamental principles of which all British subjects, wherever placed, enjoyed their rights, and the king himself put on his crown.

The power of the monarch to enter into a similar compact had never been disputed. Under his own hand, he had guaranteed to the colonists the liberties of British-born subjects, not at home, where they already exercised them without his interference, but in the desolate foreign region to which they were transferring themselves. One of those liberties consisted in being governed by laws made by persons in whose election they had a voice. That the members of the British Parliament were such persons, was not simply untrue in fact, but it was in the nature of things that they could not be made so. The only practicable form of enjoying this right was through a body constituted within the limits of the colony, capable of making laws which would be binding upon them, provided only that they were in no wise repugnant to the laws of England. There was no other limitation whatsoever; and even the right of determining what fell within this limitation was wholly reserved to the crown, and by no means vested in the Parliament.

This masterly paper then entered into a keen analysis of the governor's argument upon precedents, disputed his assertion that the supreme authority of Parliament had never before been

denied, and, with great adroitness, turned upon him several extracts from his own "History" of the colony, which certainly go far to establish the contrary. Although secondary in their application to determine the merits of the question at issue, these positions were of the first importance to invalidate the authority of their antagonist, which was one of the most serious difficulties the patriots had been summoned to confront.

Much question has been had of the authorship of this paper. In his account of the transaction, Governor Hutchinson gives the impression prevailing at the time, that "it was drawn up by Samuel Adams and Joseph Hawley, with the aid of John Adams, not then in public life, but of well established reputation in the law." Elbridge Gerry, a member of the same General Court, initiated in the secrets of the popular party, in a letter of reminiscences of much later date, incidentally ascribes its authorship to John Adams, as a fact well known to him. The brief note of Samuel Adams, calling upon John to sustain, in a reply, a position which had been taken *upon his authority* in the first paper, and which he found himself unable to maintain, is inserted in the second volume of the present work.[1] Lastly, the autobiography and letters of Mr. Adams himself, at different periods in later life, giving many particulars of the controversy, when the recollection of it had ceased to be of interest, varying in minor details, uniformly treat the legal positions of the paper, together with the authorities, as his own. Such is the extent of the direct testimony on this point. A closer analysis of its internal structure is calculated to confirm the impression of Hutchinson, that it was the work of more than one person. The reasoning from abstract principles on the authority of the Pope, the Crown, and the Parliament, shows the action of a mind long trained in the study of legal distinctions, and resembles that contained in the Dissertation on the canon and feudal law, the dispute with Brattle, and the subsequent controversy with Massachusettensis. On the other hand, the objection of Hutchinson, that words are not everywhere used in the same technical sense, is not without its force; besides which, the course of the style is more even, the sarcasm more pointed, and the sentences more epigram-

[1] P. 310.

matic than was usual with John, and rather betray the characteristics of Samuel Adams. The rough drafts of James Otis had, in like manner, been customarily submitted to his polishing pen, when Otis was the source from which he obtained his points of controversy. Neither is it at all improbable that even the argument personal to Hutchinson may have come from him, for in that warfare he had been long experienced, and was familiar with it. The marked difference in the minds of the two kinsmen is to be found in the breadth and the comprehensiveness of their ratiocination. But Samuel possessed a quality peculiarly his own. He knew how to avail himself of the resources of other men, as well in the realms of thought and acquired knowledge, as in the combinations that result in action. He was the centre around which all the movements of the patriots turned; and if he did not always originate the reasoning or the specific forms of proceeding, he is exclusively entitled to the merit of connecting them into one system, and infusing into the scattered efforts of many, all the life and energy which belongs to a single will.

The effect of the reply was to leave the controversy in a state very different from what the governor had expected. Instead of a victory decisive enough to resuscitate the expiring embers of loyalty, he failed not to be sensible of the necessity imposed upon him to resume his labor, even if it were only to maintain his own reputation. This time, he addressed himself almost entirely to the House. Avoiding the issue which had been equally joined with him by the council, he now appealed to the general principle of the feudal law vesting all land titles in the crown, as establishing the fact that British subjects, whether in or out of the island, took their grants not from the person of the sovereign, but from the crown of Great Britain. Hence he insisted that their service was due to the king as head of the authority established in the realm, legislative as well as executive, and not as an individual. Then, springing upon what he considered the weakest point in the committee's reply, he challenged their use of the word *realm* as equivocal, and perplexing the argument. "I do not charge you," he said, "with any design; but the equivocal use of the word *realm*, in several parts of your answer, makes them perplexed and obscure. Sometimes you must intend the whole dominion, which is

subject to the authority of Parliament; sometimes only strictly the territorial realm to which other dominions are or may be annexed. If you mean that no countries but the ancient territorial realm can constitutionally be subject to the supreme authority of England, which you have very incautiously said is a rule of the common law of England, this is a doctrine which you never will be able to support. That the common law should be controlled and changed by statutes, every day's experience teaches, but that the common law prescribes limits to the extent of the legislative power, I believe has never been said upon any other occasion. That acts of Parliaments for several hundred years past have respected countries which are not strictly within the realm, you might easily have discovered by the statute-books."

He proceeded to sustain his views by the examples of Wales and Calais, Guernsey, Jersey, &c., all of them holden as parts of one dominion. The plantations formed no exception. Being expressly holden by the terms of the charters as feudatory of the imperial crown of England, they were, in like manner with the rest, under the government of the king's laws and the king's courts, in cases proper for them to interpose. Having thus restated his argument, he concluded with a labored effort to do away the force of those passages of his own "History," which had been so skilfully directed against him, in the answer of the House.

It should be observed that the position taken in the second speech is, in some material points, quite different from that assumed in the first. This one had contained no allusion whatever to the feudal tenure as the source of the power of Parliament, but had traced it rather from the application of an abstract proposition, then generally conceded and not yet quite exploded, that absolute power must rest somewhere in every state, to the constitution of Great Britain. This power had been vested, by the sense of the kingdom, *in Parliament* and nowhere else, and the terms of the charter were to be construed accordingly. The later speech, on the contrary, annexed all acquisitions of territory, however made, to the state, as feudal dominions of *the crown*, which might be granted by it to individuals, subject only to the legislative authority of the empire of which the king was the head. The earlier argument dwelt little on the king, whether as

a person or a sovereign, but much on the supremacy of Parliament as the all-sufficient answer to determine every question of liberty. The second showed forth the king as the source of power, and insisted upon the distinction between his official station as wearing the imperial crown, and his mere individual condition. It was by the station, and by that alone, that he held his authority over the various portions of the empire, none of which could be separated or alienated solely at his pleasure. As a specimen of reasoning, the latter must be conceded to be the stronger production, though it rather avoids than surmounts the obstacles which had been placed in his way. At any rate, it was imposing enough to call for a grave reëxamination of the whole ground taken by the House. Fourteen days elapsed before that body replied. The casual note of Samuel Adams, already alluded to, shows that John Adams was required to furnish the rejoinder, at least in that particular upon which the governor had pounced with such assurance of victory. He had supplied the position, and he was now to vindicate it, "*if vindicable.*" These words betray the impression which Hutchinson had made even upon the writer of the note, and the little confidence he had in his own resources to meet the issue he had been the agent to present. This makes it probable that the reply which closed the controversy is more exclusively the work of John Adams, in manner as well as matter, than the earlier paper. With his characteristic boldness of abstract speculation, already once publicly exercised on the same subject, it begins by striking at feudal tenures as "a system of iniquity, which, aided by the canon law, at one time prevailed to the almost utter extinction of knowledge, virtue, religion, and liberty, in one part of the earth." Then conceding to the governor that his position was historically and legally correct, and that feudal principles were to be applied in the case of the colonial grants, it denies, with great force, the admission of any idea of Parliament, as sharing the smallest portion of the power. "'The Lord was, in early times, the legislator and judge over all his feudatories,' says Judge Blackstone." "If our government be considered as merely feudatory, we are subject to the king's absolute will, and there is no authority of Parliament, as the sovereign authority of the British empire." After quoting a variety of authorities, illustrating the correctness of this position, it proceeds to defend

the position which the governor had so boldly assaulted, and which Samuel Adams had feared was not vindicable.

"Your Excellency has misinterpreted what we have said, 'that no country, by the common law, was subject to the laws or the Parliament, but the realm of England;' and is pleased to tell us, 'that we have expressed ourselves incautiously.' We beg leave to recite the words of the judges of England, in the before-mentioned case, to our purpose. 'If a king go out of England with a company of his servants, allegiance remaineth among his subjects and servants, although he be out of his realm, whereto his laws are confined.' We did not mean to say, as your Excellency would suppose, that 'the common law prescribes limits to the extent of the legislative power,' though we shall always affirm it to be true of the law of reason and natural equity. Your Excellency thinks you have made it appear that the 'Colony of Massachusetts Bay is holden as feudatory of the imperial crown of England,' and, therefore, you say, 'to use the words of a very great authority in a case in some respects analogous to it, 'being feudatory, it necessarily follows that it is under the government of the king's laws.' Your Excellency has not named this authority; but we conceive his meaning must be, that, being feudatory, it is under the government of the king's laws absolutely; for, as we have before said, the feudal system admits of no idea of the authority of Parliament; and this would have been the case of the colony, but for the compact with the king in the charter.

"Your Excellency says, that 'persons thus holding under the crown of England, remain or become subjects of England,' by which we suppose your Excellency to mean, subject to the supreme authority of Parliament, 'to all intents and purposes, as fully as if any of the royal manors, &c., within the realm, had been granted to them upon the like tenure.' We apprehend, with submission, your Excellency is mistaken in supposing that our allegiance is due to the crown of England. Every man swears allegiance for himself, to his own king, in his natural person. 'Every subject is presumed by law to be sworn to the king, which is to his natural person,' says Lord Coke. 'The allegiance is due to his natural body;' and he says: 'In the reign of Edward the Second, the Spencers, the father and the son, to cover the treason hatched in their hearts, invented

this damnable and damned opinion, that homage and oath of allegiance was more by reason of the king's crown, that is, of his politic capacity, than by reason of the person of the king; upon which opinion, they inferred execrable and detestable consequents.' The judges of England, all but one, in the case of the union between Scotland and England, declared that 'allegiance followeth the natural person, not the politic,' and 'to prove the allegiance to be tied to the body natural of the king, and not to the body politic, the Lord Coke cited the phrases of divers statutes mentioning our natural liege sovereign.' If, then, the homage and allegiance is not to the body politic of the king, it is not to him as the head, or any part of that legislative authority, which your Excellency says 'is equally extensive with the authority of the crown throughout every part of the dominion'; and your Excellency's observations thereupon must fail."

Nothing could be more triumphant than this retort; which was followed up by further quotations from the highest professional authorities, proving, beyond all question, that the limits of the legislative power of England and of allegiance of subjects to the king of Great Britain had not been regarded as identical; and hence the governor's assumption that the colonists were necessarily subject to the supreme authority of Parliament, because subject to the king only as the head of it, could not be sustained.

Having in this manner met the objections of the governor, the committee went on to restate their position. The first colonists, proceeding on the assumption that the lands in America were out of the bounds of the realm of England, had applied to the king for liberty to go out and settle them. The king, concurring in their view, had entered into a contract with them by his charter, reserving allegiance to him in his natural capacity, and securing to them the rights and privileges of British subjects, but *not the title to their lands*. In approaching here the most perplexing part of the whole question, they say: "If it be difficult for us to show how the king acquired a title to this country, in his natural capacity, or separate from his relation to his subjects, *which we confess*, yet we conceive it will be equally difficult for your Excellency to show how the body politic and nation of England acquired it. Our ancestors

supposed it was acquired by neither; and therefore they declared, as we have before quoted from your history, that, saving their actual purchase, from the natives, of the soil, the dominion, the lordship, and sovereignty, they had, in the sight of God and man, no right and title to what they possessed. How much clearer, then, in natural reason and equity, must our title be, who hold estates dearly purchased at the expense of our own as well as our ancestors' labor, and defended by them with treasure and blood!"

Here, again, is visible the most striking characteristic of Mr. Adams's mind, his resort to first principles, and his departure from mere authority, whenever his discriminating sense perceives them to begin to separate. Proceeding in the same path, the paper confronted the governor with a series of extracts, first from writers of elementary law and then from the historians of the province, not excepting Hutchinson himself, all directed to the overwhelming establishment of the main position. It then concluded with the following eloquent paragraph: —

"The question appears to us to be no other than whether we are subjects of absolute unlimited power, or of a free government formed on the principles of the English constitution. If your Excellency's doctrine be true, the people of this province hold their lands of the crown and people of England; and their lives, liberties, and properties are at their disposal, and that even by compact and their own consent. They were subject to the king as the head *alterius populi*, of another people, in whose legislative they have no voice or interest. They are, indeed, said to have a constitution and a legislative of their own; but your Excellency has explained it into a mere phantom, limited, controlled, superseded, and nullified, at the will of another. Is this the constitution which so charmed our ancestors, that, as your Excellency has informed us, they kept a day of solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God when they received it? And were they men of so little discernment, such children in understanding, as to please themselves with the imagination that they were blessed with the same rights and liberties which natural-born subjects in England enjoyed, when, at the same time, they had fully consented to be ruled and ordered by a legislative, a thousand leagues distant from them, which cannot be supposed to be sufficiently acquainted with their circumstances, if con-

cerned for their interest, and in which they cannot be in any sense represented?"

Thus terminated the most remarkable controversy which preceded the Revolution. The governor found himself without the laurels which he so confidently expected to twine around his brows, and earning the reproaches instead of the applause of the chiefs beyond the water, into whose favor it had been his purpose to ingratiate himself. He himself admits that the ministry looked coldly upon his experiment. In point of fact they gave him no thanks for volunteering in a duty which they did not care to see performed. The discussion of first principles was a matter for which neither by habit nor inclination, by capacity or by taste, any of them had the smallest predilection. They saw in the Americans only a set of troublesome factionists, who were to be treated with no more consideration than was due to their imagined power to do mischief with impunity. And if things should come to the worst, all that would be necessary to set them right at last would be the mission of a few more British regiments. To reason about the rights of Great Britain was, in their view, beneath the dignity of Englishmen. And it must be conceded that Governor Hutchinson, by inviting a discussion, placed his principals in a dilemma from which extrication was not easy. If the authority of Parliament was implied in the use of the term *imperial crown*, according to the second speech, then it followed that it was bound by the limitations and restrictions set forth in the royal charter. If, on the other hand, it was not so implied, then the charter was a compact with the king alone, to which Parliament was not a party further than might be expressed by the terms of it.

It is more easy, however, to refute his reasonings than to maintain any consistent affirmative on the opposite side. The subject is full of difficulties growing out of the anomalies of the constitutional system of Great Britain. The bundle of habits and customs which make what is called its common law, grew out of the necessity of providing for immediate contingencies occurring in the common course of events. It moulded itself around circumstances, instead of being moulded in advance of them. Beginning in a day of small things, and of authority vaguely defined, it sometimes took its shape from

accident, and much oftener from necessity than foresight. Originally confined within the narrow limits of England proper, it had been gradually accommodated to the ever enlarging sphere of the national acquisitions. Colonization, conquest, and compact, all came in turn, introducing new modifications into the system not reducible to any general law. Each case may be said to have been regulated by some special necessity of its own. And all the fine threads of authority, thus woven out of the most dissimilar materials and gathered into various knots in the course of many generations of collective activity, present to the curious observer rather a happy agglomeration of inconsistencies difficult to reconcile, than one plan resolvable into a few principles, and matured by the joint experience and forecast of the most elevated genius.

But out of all the extensions of the British empire, none presents more difficulties of analysis than that effected by the colonization of North America. Carried away by the adventurous spirit of the age which followed the discovery of a hemisphere, the monarchs of Europe vied with each other, not in originating national enterprises, but in stimulating the private and voluntary undertakings of their subjects. They showed themselves quite ready to share the advantages of success, without hazarding by any means a proportionate loss from failure. To this policy the sovereigns of Great Britain most of all adhered. The Stuarts made no scruple of granting powers without stint, to take territories which did not belong to them, to individuals whose presence within the kingdom was considered more burdensome than advantageous. As a consequence, the religious schismatics abounding in that day, persecuted at home, eagerly snatched the opportunity to lay in other climes the foundations of new communities, where they fondly hoped to perpetuate the cherished principles of their peculiar faith. Thus sprung into existence colonies whose motive was to indurate and extend forms of opinion not in unison with those which continued to prevail in the mother country. The seeds thus sown were not to produce the fruit of the parent tree, but a progeny differing more and more with the descent of time. Unlike the colonization of the Greeks, the first as it is the best and most consistent of the systems ever devised, the relations growing out of this exodus were not harmonious, but discordant. Hence it

is that at no time was any spirit of cordial good-will towards their American dependencies visible in the people or government of the mother country. In its best form, it approximated the patronage of contempt. Yet the grants of powers and privileges, which cost less than the paper on which they were written, had been lavish, whilst ignorance combined with indifference to the results, in leaving the recipients to develope their own resources almost without restraint. Neither was the first attempt to impose a curb the consequence of a conflict of principle. It came from the exclusive commercial jealousy of nations in the last century, which viewed every advantage of industry gained by others as just so much loss suffered by themselves. The mercantile and manufacturing temper of Great Britain regarded the people of the colonies not as friends and brethren, but as strangers who might be made tributaries. The idea of civil rights was not in question any more than if the country had been conquered by arms. And in a conflict of interests there was no notion of settling them by compromise or concession. The entire sacrifice was to be made by the Americans. The commercial definition of the term *colony* all over Europe, after the discovery of the new world, made it a dependency not for the benefit of the offshoot, but only to strengthen the parent stem.

Had the people who settled in America all come over under the influence of these purely commercial ideas, there might have been no difficulty in settling this matter in time. But so far from it, they had been trained in the very opposite schools of religious and political heterodoxy. Contention was a familiar idea; resistance a matter of habit, as well as of principle. The spirit thus nursed could not be like that which comes from trade, a spirit of negotiating equivalents, for there were no such things as equivalents in their vocabulary. It had lived through all sorts of moral trials. When, therefore, the struggle came down to a mere pecuniary imposition, they carried into it the generalizations of higher levels of thought. When they had grown strong enough to be taxable, they had likewise grown strong enough to deny the right under which they were expected to contribute the tax. Hence the whole conflict of the Revolution. It had a more lofty source than local law, or the caprice of a monarch, though it received a great impulse

from both. The commercial school of British statesmen construed colonization as implying subjection. The theological democracy of the colony twisted it into virtual independence, with relations of mutual good-will. Between these two extremes there was little likelihood of coming to a settlement upon the uncertain basis presented by Hutchinson, the only consequence of whose labor was to expose its shallowness. The matter could be disposed of by concession or by force, but not by reasoning. It was not then without cause that the British ministry censured his officiousness, even though they might maintain that in some of the technicalities of his argument he had not been and could not be fully refuted.

A few days after the close of this controversy, the waning influence of Hutchinson received its final blow under the exposure, by an agency in England never fully disclosed, of his secret instigation of the odious policy under which the colony was groaning. Mr. Adams received the packet of letters containing it from Thomas Cushing, the speaker of the House, to whom it had been transmitted by Dr. Franklin,[1] in London; and it is said that he took it with him in one of his customary professional circuits. His meditations upon it are fully shown in his private "Diary." That one of the few natives ever advanced to the chief place in the colony should have been the one to suggest, that "there must be an abridgment of what are called English liberties," was revolting enough, to be sure. "These cool projectors and speculators in politics will ruin this country," indignantly breaks out Mr. Adams: "Bone of our bone; born and educated among us! Mr. Hancock is deeply affected; is determined, in conjunction with Major Hawley, to watch the vile serpent, and his deputy serpent, Bratle. The subtlety of this serpent is equal to that of the old one." Prior to the submission of these papers, however, to the new General

[1] A copy of Dr. Franklin's letter to Cushing is found in Mr. Adams's handwriting, in conjunction with one, taken at the same time, of Hutchinson's most objectionable letter. The former has never been printed in any other form than that used by Franklin himself in the explanation of the transaction drawn up in London at the time of the duel, and first introduced by W. T. Franklin into his biography of his grandfather. It is probable that that must have been taken from an imperfect draft remaining in his hands; for the fact is undeniable that it differs from this copy in several places. The differences are, moreover, somewhat material. The letter, as it appears in Mr. Adams's copy, is placed in the Appendix to this volume, (A.)

Court, it seems that the popular party had determined to place a further check upon the governor by introducing Mr. Adams into the Council. His secret thoughts upon the eve of this event are such as could come only into the mind of a disinterested statesman. But the pledge, which is one not infrequently taken, on the threshold of public life, by men who are yet found to faint by the wayside before the end of the journey, was by him fully redeemed in every part down to the latest hour of his career.

1773, May 24. "To-morrow is our general election. The plots, plans, schemes, and machinations of this evening and night will be very numerous. By the number of ministerial, governmental people returned, and by the secrecy of the friends of liberty relating to the grand discovery of the complete evidence of the whole mystery of iniquity, I much fear the elections will go unhappily. For myself, I own, I tremble at the thought of an election. What will be expected of me? What will be required of me? What duties and obligations will result to me from an election? What duties to my God, my king, my country, my family, my friends, myself? What perplexities, and intricacies, and difficulties shall I be exposed to? What snares and temptations will be thrown in my way? What self-denials and mortifications shall I be obliged to bear?

"If I should be called, in the course of Providence, to take a part in public life, I shall act a fearless, intrepid, undaunted part at all hazards, though it shall be my endeavor, likewise, to act a prudent, cautious, and considerate part. But if I should be excused by a non-election, or by the exertions of prerogative, from engaging in public business, I shall enjoy a sweet tranquillity in the pursuit of my private business, in the education of my children, and in a constant attention to the preservation of my health. This last is the most selfish and pleasant system; the first, the more generous, though arduous and disagreeable."

His prognostication of executive interference proved correct. The governor put his negative upon him, because of "the very conspicuous part he had taken in opposition," though he had not been prominent in any other manner than by avowing his opinions and giving advice. But events were now running too rapidly to a crisis, to render a like exercise of authority any thing more than a provocative. The thunder which had

muttered during the preceding session, against those judges who should profit of the crown grants of salaries, now burst with violence over the head of Hutchinson himself. By a resort to an expedient of a kind which parties not infrequently adopt to cover a useful wrong, his secret counsels transmitted to the other side of the water were published by the General Court to the world; and then they were made the basis of a formal remonstrance to the king against the conduct of Thomas Hutchinson, governor. Andrew Oliver, the lieutenant-governor, whose letters had likewise been betrayed, was involved in the same complaint. And a prayer was added, that his Majesty would be pleased to remove them both from the government of the province forever. However unlikely that this prayer would be heeded, a doubt could scarcely remain that the usefulness of Hutchinson, as an instrument to carry out any ministerial policy, was at an end. Not a great while after, his suit for permission to repair to England, in order, in person, to explain his course more fully than he could do by letter, was granted. He embarked the next year, never again to look upon the native land which he loved, and yet which he had so grievously betrayed. Even at that moment he undoubtedly cherished visions of a restoration in power and glory, after the shock of the conflict should have passed away, and the rebellious temper of his opponents should have been atoned for by chastisement and in chains. No such reality was in store for him. His cherished villa upon Milton hill passed into the hands of those opponents, and neglect and isolation in the country to which he had sacrificed himself, came to add poignancy to the domestic afflictions of his later days. Such was the reward of cold and ambitious selfishness! The natural pity excited by a close of life like his is checked by the thought of what evils the success of his schemes would have imposed upon multitudes then unborn. It is not often, under the imperfect dispensations of justice upon earth, that its political annals present so instructive a lesson of moral retribution.

But although the man was about to be removed, it was by no means clear that the absolute system which he had contributed to introduce would not become gradually confirmed by time. The judges of the superior court had betrayed no reluctance to the proposed change of the source of their emoluments from

an uncertain and capricious legislative assembly to the steady patronage of the crown. Several efforts made in advance to deter them from accepting the apprehended overtures had not been attended with such success as to quiet the popular uneasiness. A later and more menacing tone extorted the fact that the chief justice had already availed himself of his Majesty's grant for eighteen months' salary; that three of the justices, though intimidated for the moment, could not be depended upon permanently to decline it; and that but one was disposed, in good faith, to abide by the good-will of his fellow-citizens, according to ancient forms. This view of the case was not a little discouraging. It betokened the ultimate union of the executive and judiciary powers on this side, sustained by all the official power of the crown on the other side of the Atlantic, against the popular party. The issue, at best a very doubtful one, depended for a favorable turn mainly upon the extent to which unanimity of sentiment at home could be preserved. The open secession of the judges would be soon followed by that of many leading lawyers, whose leanings were not misunderstood; and thus a foundation would be laid for divisions fatal to all hopes of ultimately establishing the popular cause.

The secret discouragement of the patriot leaders, whilst reflecting upon the means of counteracting this subtle policy, has been sufficiently set forth by Mr. Adams, in his "Autobiography.[1]" They had pushed their attack upon the chief justice as far as they thought it could be carried. The House had drawn up a remonstrance demanding his removal, which they had formally presented to the governor and council for their decision, and had gone so far as to vote the adjournment of the superior court for three days after the regular commencement of the term, in order to prevent his sitting whilst it remained unacted upon. But the governor had very quietly set at nought both of these measures, by interposing his negative to the one, and rejecting the other without even communicating it to the council. Indeed, he could scarcely have done otherwise in a case in which the chief justice was complained of for obeying an act prescribed by the authority of the king himself, whose repre-

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 328–332.

sentative in the colony he was. A further petition and remonstrance was tried, enlarging the grounds of complaint so as to include the governor's action independently of the advice of his council. But that met with no better success.

In the mean time the court had been adjourned from day to day, the chief justice only awaiting the issue of the controversy to show the impotence of the attack by taking his seat and claiming the victory. The embarrassment was serious, for delays could avail but a little while longer. The extrication from it was due to Mr. Adams, and to him alone. This is one of the instances in his life in which the extraordinary force of his will gave a decided turn to events. He saw at once that it was no moment to listen to half-way expedients, that nothing would avail but a determined blow at the source of the judicial authority. He proposed at once the IMPEACHMENT OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE. Such a measure had not been without precedent in the colony, though it had not been provided for by the terms of the charter. At first it struck the other patriot lawyers with surprise at its boldness, and they questioned its practicability. Mr. Adams was not unprepared for objections. He had meditated the subject, had traced the sources of the power of impeachment in the mother country, had analyzed the nature of the personal security guaranteed to the native-born British subject, and extended to the colonist by the charter, and was ready to maintain that the only safeguard against the abuses of the judicial power in Massachusetts was by process of impeachment, by the House of Representatives, before the council.

The presumption that this body, either in its origin or its functions, bore any analogy, as a tribunal, to the House of Lords, was certainly violent. Elected annually by the votes of the lower House, and subject to the negative of the executive, it had few elements which could make it an independent arbiter, in the last resort, of the delinquencies of the highest judicial officers. On the other hand, if this body could not act, it was clear that there was no protection against abuse. An early act of Parliament had made the governor amenable, in cases of malfeasance, to the court in Westminster Hall, but its provisions applied to no other officer. Neither would they have availed, had they embraced the judges. Justice transferred to tribunals beyond sea, and, consequently, delayed indefinitely,

is equivalent to justice denied. It can hardly be presumed that a court, were it to be signalized by the enormities of a Scroggs, or the butcheries of a Jeffreys, might have been lawfully imposed upon a community entitled to English liberties, without some more effective restraint than the tardy interference of a jurisdiction wholly foreign from their social organization. Such a conclusion would have thrown even the most ardent loyalist upon his natural rights, as the only way to secure his personal safety.

The construction of the law given by Mr. Adams avoided this necessity. The charter of William and Mary had granted to the General Court of the province the power to establish courts of justice, and to the governor and council that of appointing the judges. Here, if anywhere, the judges were amenable in cases of delinquency. Hence it followed, by a very natural analogy, that, in the absence of all other adequate authority, upon the House of Representatives must devolve the responsibility of embodying the grievances which the people might suffer in the administration of justice; and, for the same reason, the governor and council, the only remedial institution remaining capable of hearing a complaint in the last resort, must be the tribunal to pronounce upon their guilt.

The opinion of Mr. Adams was canvassed by the other lawyers on the patriot side, and was even submitted to the only judge on the bench supposed to sympathize with them. Trowbridge showed himself not averse to it, although he cautiously avoided committing himself. The substance of the dialogue, as given by Mr. Adams, is characteristic enough on both sides. "I see," said the judge to him, "you are determined to explore the constitution, and bring to life all its dormant and latent powers, in defence of your liberties, as you understand them." To which he replied, that "he should be very happy if the constitution could carry them safely through all their difficulties, without having recourse to higher powers not written." It was doubtless in this spirit that his advice was taken by his friends, and the necessary measures accordingly prepared, by which to present Peter Oliver, chief justice of the superior court, guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors, as set forth in the proper forms of impeachment. The result was, that they were adopted by a vote of ninety-two members of the House against only

eight dissentients. Notwithstanding all the skill of Hutchinson, interposed to parry the force of this shaft, it struck its object with unerring aim. Oliver, the sternest and most resolute of his coadjutors, was from the instant disabled from further co-operation. A tribunal more potent than the governor or the bench took up the matter, and refused to recognize the chief justice as a rightful officer until the charges brought against him should have been acted upon. It was in vain that the court was opened in all the customary forms, that the judges declared themselves ready to hear and the counsel to speak. When those who had been drawn to act as jurymen were summoned to qualify in the usual form, not a man could be found to consent. Each individual, as his name was called, assigned as his reason for declining, that the presiding officer, having been charged with high crimes and misdemeanors in office, by the legislative power of the province, could not be recognized as a suitable person to hold the court, whilst the charges remained unacted upon. Such was the unanimity of sentiment that even Oliver quailed before it, and the highest court of the province was, from this moment, effectually closed.

Under this last shock perished the elaborate policy woven from the subtle brain of the fourth and last provincial governor of the native stock of Massachusetts. The web was torn to atoms, and not a shred remained with which to begin anew. From this time Hutchinsons and Olivers, and their ignoble train of followers, are completely obliterated from the record. Unlike every other struggle of the kind in the province, this one had been stimulated by suggestions of domestic origin. No social and political connection of similar power and extent had ever before been organized on the side of prerogative, none which promised so fair ultimately to reconcile the temper of the people at least to a material abridgment of their ancient liberties. For thirteen years had the contest been carried on, with various results, generally with the appearance of success on the popular side, but not without frequent misgivings of its strength seriously undermined in secret. The power, which was applicable to change the fortunes of the day, was great enough. It only needed to be used with more system and harmony to a given purpose at the same time on both sides of the Atlantic, to be likely to triumph. Neither was it the less effective, because

its operations were generally underhand. Fortunate was it that no minister came forth to give the force of a strong will and energetic unity to the execution of these designs. It cannot be disputed that the ever fluctuating state of the home government, weakening the confidence of Hutchinson in the steadiness of the support he might receive in difficult cases, contributed largely to paralyze his policy. The party dissensions in England dismayed the tories as much as they encouraged the whigs. Whenever the voice of Chatham rang out, it was as the sound of a trumpet to those to whose opinions, in their full extent, even then nobody would have been more decidedly adverse than he; whilst it spread consternation among the official tribe and the waiters upon Providence, never sure that the next ship might not bring news of his elevation to a place, where it was of some consequence to them that their advice should not be too clearly on record against them. Thus it happened that the field had been lost, and the defeated forces retired, never again to renew the contest in the same way.

Here occurs an epoch in the Revolution. Up to this moment the trial had been purely one of moral power, carried on under the restraint of constitutional forms. It was soon to become one of physical force. Reason was exhausted, and nothing was left but arms. With the violent destruction of the tea, and the advent of General Gage, opens the active drama of the Revolution. The position of Mr. Adams becomes, likewise, correspondingly altered. Thus far he had been for the most part a counsellor. Henceforth he is to be seen as a leader in the most difficult action of the times.

CHAPTER IV.

ENTRANCE INTO PUBLIC LIFE — THE CONGRESS OF 1774 — SERVICES FROM THAT TIME UNTIL THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

DURING the passage of the events described in the last chapter, in which the executive and judicial powers of the colony had been brought to a stand, and Hutchinson, the head of the loyalist party, had, in despair, determined to abandon the struggle, the British ministry was engaged in maturing new plans to overcome the resistance of Massachusetts. Lord North, no longer indulging in the sanguine anticipations of an early return to peace by the voluntary submission of the colonists, was now to become the exponent of the royal indignation. In this indignation the people of Great Britain much more largely shared after the news arrived of the general rejection of the tea. And it was most particularly directed against the town of Boston, because Boston had marked her proceedings with the most aggravated form of resistance. The chastisement for these offences was defined by the minister, through the introduction into Parliament, in quick succession, of the three bills, which shut up the port of Boston, which, under the name of regulation, annihilated the charter of the colony, and which transferred the jurisdiction over cases of riot and tumult to the courts of the mother country. Simultaneously with the passage of these minatory acts, came the preparation of a military force deemed adequate to enforce them. The executive authority, no longer entrusted to men in civil life, was vested in General Gage, an officer high in the ranks of the regular army, at the same time that his command was extended by the transfer of more regiments to Massachusetts. Eleven in number were concentrated at last, but instead of being ready for immediate use, they were many months in collecting at Boston. The policy now was, by the presence of an overawing force, to give, in all the essential

parts of the government, such a preponderance to the known partisans of the British authority, that its ordinary functions could be performed by them without the possibility of effective interruption; but it was feebly executed. Had the parties in the colony been in any way equally divided, the scheme might possibly have succeeded. The ministry all along acted under impressions that they were so, which had been spread over Great Britain by dependents in America interested to make them believe it. In point of fact, the new system, having no such basis, resolved itself simply into an attempt to impose a government, without an adequate power to make it obeyed. The charter of William and Mary was, indeed, set aside, but martial law had not yet the force at hand to put what it pleased in its place.

Mr. Adams had steadily adhered to his profession as long as it was open to him. Even in the case of the destruction of the tea, which decided the fate of future events, although evidently cognizant of the intent, he preferred to be ignorant of every detail, so that, in case the participators should be drawn into the courts, he might serve them with more freedom. In politics, he had been, with the single exception of one year's service in the legislature, solely the counsellor, whilst others acted. Throughout the controversies, involving questions of natural or common or provincial law, which had been carried on between 1770 and 1774, his learning and talents had been relied upon to sustain the patriot view. But he continued fixed to his practice. The arrival of General Gage materially changed this attitude. The blow which had shut up the courts, had rebounded upon him. Then came the closing of the port of Boston, and the other acts, to complete the general disorder, and to inspire no hope of an early return to a better state of things. His occupation was gone, and with it his best means of living. The labors of twenty years were in jeopardy on the one side, whilst on the other a gloomy vista was opening of dangers and sufferings to be incurred as a penalty for perseverance in opposition. The little town with whose fortunes he had identified himself, which had struggled through a century and a half of various fortunes with unabated fortitude, and resolute though slow success, was threatened with depopulation, unless it bent to the storm; and the province itself seemed to have before it no alternative

between servile submission to the royal commands, and the quixotic project of war against the gigantic powers of the British empire. Surely, this was a prospect sad enough to depress the most hopeful spirit and to shake the strongest nerves. Yet Mr. Adams was neither rashly exalted nor unduly discouraged under these difficulties. That he fully understood their nature, is made certain by his own pen. Musing upon the unwonted leisure, which had been thus imposed upon him, he sat down and wrote to his wife, then at Braintree, the following description of his state of mind.

"Boston, 12 May, 1774.

"My own infirmities, the account of the return of yours, and the public news, coming all together, have put my philosophy to the trial.

"We live, my dear soul, in an age of trial. What will be the consequence, I know not. The town of Boston, for aught I can see, must suffer martyrdom. It must expire. And our principal consolation is, that it dies in a noble cause — the cause of truth, of virtue, of liberty, and of humanity, and that it will probably have a glorious resurrection to greater wealth, splendor, and power than ever.

"Let me know what is best for us to do. It is expensive keeping a family here, and there is no prospect of any business in my way in this town this whole summer. I don't receive a shilling a week. We must contrive as many ways as we can to save expenses; for we may have calls to contribute very largely, in proportion to our circumstances, to prevent other very honest worthy people from suffering for want, besides our own loss in point of business and profit.

"Don't imagine, from all this, that I am in the dumps. Far otherwise; I can truly say that I have felt more spirits and activity since the arrival of this news than I have done for years. I look upon this as the last effort of Lord North's despair, and he will as surely be defeated in it as he was in the project of the tea."

This letter presents a new instance of that peculiar habit of Mr. Adams's mind, of living in the future, which manifested itself so early in the letter to Nathan Webb, and which con-

tinued to mark him throughout his career. He measured the present difficulties with a calm, appreciative eye. He saw the full extent of the hazard both to his country and himself; but so far from shaking his firm resolve and unfaltering trust, it only nerved him with added power to go through the trial, whatever it might be, to the end he saw in the distance, a certain triumph. This feeling remained unchanged in all the vicissitudes of the subsequent contest.

Yet Mr. Adams, now in his thirty-ninth year, had hitherto been only a private man, honored with few marks of the confidence of his fellow-citizens. Indeed, he had rather sought to avoid than to win them. But the same necessity which had already prompted the patriot leaders to have recourse to him in counsel, now impelled them to an effort to bring him more decidedly upon the field of action. The first sign of this was in the attempt of the House of Representatives, at their meeting in the last week of May, to place him in the council of General Gage, an attempt which that officer immediately rendered vain by his negative. It was one of Gage's last acts under the old constitutional forms. Soon afterwards, despairing of his ability to control that body, whilst yet protected by the charter, he adjourned it until the 7th of June, just a week after the new acts of parliament were to go into operation, under which it was prescribed to meet, not at Boston, but in Salem. For a moment he thought the blow decisive, and he wrote to Lord Dartmouth his conviction that the opposition were staggered. However true this might have been of some, it was not true of Samuel Adams and Joseph Hawley, the main springs of the patriot movements. The brief period that intervened was spent in the most sedulous secret efforts to meet the great emergency; so that when the House assembled again, according to the order, at Salem, they matured their plans of organization and their resolutions, needing but few days to inspire most of the members with the proper energy to carry them out. Those few days were granted by the incautious confidence of the governor. Just as he was taking measures to repair his error, on the seventeenth of June, a day memorable in the annals of Massachusetts for more than one event, the signal for action was given in the House by a motion, that the doorkeeper keep the doors closed against all passage in or out.

Immediately, one hundred and twenty-nine members being present, resolutions were presented, among other things, approving of a meeting of what were designated as *committees* from the several colonies of America, at Philadelphia, on the 1st of September, "to consult upon wise and proper measures to be recommended to all the colonies for the recovery and establishment of their just rights and liberties, civil and religious, and the restoration of union and harmony between the two countries, most ardently desired by all good men," and nominating James Bowdoin, Thomas Cushing, Samuel Adams, John Adams, and Robert Treat Paine, to serve as the committee in behalf of Massachusetts. These resolutions, embodying many other points not necessary to be mentioned in this connection, were taken up for immediate decision. The surprise was complete, and the stroke seemed to be decisive.

But there was, nevertheless, a moment of danger. A few spies were in the camp. One of them evaded the vigilance of the doorkeeper, and communicated the tidings to General Gage. Quick as he heard them, that officer dispatched the secretary to the House with a message, dissolving the assembly. He got there in good season, but the door was locked, and the messenger would not open it without the order of the House. The secretary then directed him to acquaint the speaker that he was charged with a message from the governor. The speaker received the notice, and announced it to the House. The House gravely confirmed their order, that no one be admitted. Meantime a few idlers and several members had gathered on the steps in front of the locked door, and in their presence the secretary, having received the House's answer, proceeded to read aloud the message and the proclamation, dispersing the assembly. Nothing daunted by this outside fulmination, the body steadily persisted in passing through all the forms necessary to make their act complete. The final division upon the adoption of the resolutions stood one hundred and seventeen in the affirmative, twelve in the negative. The members then separated, just as if they had received the message in due form. With them passed away the last provincial assembly that ever acted under the royal authority in Massachusetts.

Thus it happened that John Adams was thrown forward upon the new theatre of continental politics. The committee of five

had not been selected without great care, and the members of it closely represented the various interests of the colony. Mr. Bowdoin was of the few, favored by fortune above the average of the community, who had decidedly embraced the patriot cause. Mr. Cushing was a type of the commercial class on the seaboard. John Adams and Robert Treat Paine answered for the professional and educated men, whilst Samuel Adams stood as the personification of the religious and political spirit of the majority, and an index of their policy. To the disinclination felt by Joseph Hawley to prominence in active service was the selection of John Adams probably due. His sagacious mind had, some time before, perceived the value of the qualities of his younger friend, in any great emergency, and this had prompted earlier efforts to bring him into the public service. There is reason to suppose that he now urged his nomination in lieu of accepting a place which would undoubtedly have been his own, if he had wished it. Similar impressions secured the coöperation of Samuel Adams, with the addition of a personal desire for an assistant and counsellor in his colleague and kinsman. John Adams himself seems to have had little part in the matter. Whilst the choice was making, he was in Boston, presiding over a large meeting of the citizens convened at Faneuil Hall, to consult upon the measures proper to be taken in view of the parliamentary edict which annihilated their trade, and the means of subsistence of the greater number. Attendance upon such meetings had not been his wont, neither had the popular action always been exactly what he approved when he was present,[1] but the object of this call was

[1] It was probably about this time, and in connection with the project of some of the merchants to settle the difficulty by making voluntary contributions to pay for the tea destroyed, that one of these instances occurred, related to the writer by the late John Quincy Adams, as a fact which had often been told to him in his youth. Though resting on tradition alone for its authority, it is too characteristic to be omitted. At the town meeting in question, Thomas Boylston, a wealthy merchant of good standing, but not a favorite, attempted to speak against some proposition which the majority approved. He had not gone far before the popular impatience broke out in efforts to stop him with noise. In the midst of the confusion, John Adams interposed. In brief terms, he expressed his mortification at finding the people indisposed to listen to the expression of a reasonable opinion, given respectfully, in calm language, merely because it differed from their own. He had hoped and expected that Mr. Boylston, from his age, good sense, and experience of life, would receive the attention to which, as a citizen, he was entitled. Instead of this, he had witnessed what he could describe best in the words of Milton: —

one to which no true heart could fail to respond. The question fell little short of devising a way to save the poor from starvation. Assistance was to be afforded, or the gravest difficulties were likely to ensue. Relief had been solicited from without. The communication of the response thus far made to these applications was one of the objects of the meeting. Letters, which had been sent in all directions, in and out of the province, by the committee of correspondence, soliciting relief, and such answers as had been received, were there read. The tenor of the latter was encouraging, but not decisive. The prospect was not without its deep shadows. Yet the brave Bostonians, nothing daunted, with but a single dissenting voice, adopted the following resolution: —

"Voted, that the committee of correspondence be enjoined forthwith to write to all the other colonies, acquainting them that we are not idle; that we are deliberating upon the steps to be taken on the present exigencies of our public affairs; that our brethren, the landed interest of this province, with an unexampled spirit and unanimity, are entering into a non-consumption agreement; and that we are waiting, with anxious expectation, for the result of a continental congress, whose meeting we impatiently desire, in whose wisdom and firmness we can confide, and in whose determination we shall cheerfully acquiesce."

Thus it was that the people of this purely commercial town put every thing at stake on this issue, and threw themselves upon the sympathies of their brethren everywhere, who had not yet become to a like extent involved in the struggle. To them alone resistance one inch further was a question of life and death. The deep anxiety with which they must have looked to the probabilities of success in the grand attempt at combination now set in motion, through which was to come their

"I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of *owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs.*"

As he uttered the last line with great distinctness of emphasis, and with corresponding gestures to those parts of the hall from which the noise had emanated, the boldness of the reproof may readily be conceived. It had its effect to restore the most profound silence, but Mr. Boylston declined to go on with his remarks.

only chance of salvation, may readily be imagined. And if such was the general feeling, how much must he have felt its pressure, who was giving to the proceedings his official approbation! Upon him, as one of the selected delegates, was the duty falling of attempting to guide the counsels of that congress from which they expected so much. Upon him, as unquestionably the ablest advocate of the number, would devolve a great share of the task of presenting their cause. And upon him would recoil much of the discredit which might follow any failure to gain for it the desired favor. To the magnitude of this responsibility his eyes were fully open. His "Diary" here comes in to show his inmost meditations, divided between fears of his own fitness for the emergency, projects to recommend for adoption, and apprehensions of an adverse result. "I wander alone and ponder," he says; "I muse, I mope, I ruminate. I am often in reveries and brown studies. The objects before me are too grand and multifarious for my comprehension. We have not men fit for the times. We are deficient in genius, in education, in travel, in fortune, in every thing. I feel unutterable anxiety. God grant us wisdom and fortitude! Should the opposition be suppressed, should this country submit, what infamy and ruin! God forbid! Death, in any form, is less terrible."

This was not the impulse of a mere insurgent, who plunges into violent opposition to established government without counting the cost or measuring the consequences of his acts. The professional life of Mr. Adams had been cut off at the very moment when the labors of years were returning to him the most richly the long expected reward. And, instead of it, a field was opening for which his capacity was yet untried, a field, too, in which not the wisest or most gifted man can predict success to his efforts from appearances even the most promising. Worst of all, to a sensitive and honest mind, there was the chance of failure in the cause, with its sequence of ruin, not to him alone, but to all that was most dear to him. Perhaps he might himself be brought as a malefactor to the block.[1] There may be those who, in sunny times, can form out of pledges of

[1] "There is one ugly reflection. Brutus and Cassius were conquered and slain, Hampden died in the field, *Sidney on the scaffold*." &c.
Letter to James Warren, vol. ix. p. 338.

devotion to freedom a safe and honorable road to fame and fortune, but their merit is of a passive sort if contrasted with the prospect of Massachusetts in 1774, when the thunders of Britain were rolling heavily over the devoted heads of the Boston people, and when a step further in advance seemed like tempting Providence to speed the fatal bolt.

The 1st of September had been designated as the day of meeting of the proposed congress. The interval was passed by Mr. Adams in a professional circuit to the eastern part of the province, which now makes the State of Maine. At this time commences the regular confidential correspondence with his wife, a woman who shared in his anxieties and seconded his noblest aspirations, which was steadily kept up through all the long and various separations consequent upon his public life. Whilst he was writing to his political friends for the best results of their reflections upon the wisest course to be taken in the present public emergency, to her he communicated more particularly his personal solicitude. To Joseph Hawley, he enlarged on the necessity which made him a politician against his will. "Politics are an ordeal path among redhot ploughshares. Who, then, would be a politician, for the pleasure of running about barefoot among them? Yet somebody must." But to his wife, he complained of his professional absence from the county of Suffolk, because he lost a chance of fitting himself better for his new duties. "If I was there, I could converse with the gentlemen who are bound with me for Philadelphia. I could turn the course of my reading and studies to such subjects of law and politics and commerce as may come in play at the congress. I might be polishing up my old reading in law and history, that I might appear with less indecency before a variety of gentlemen, whose education, travels, experience, family, fortune, and every thing will give them a vast superiority to me, and, I fear, even to some of my companions." This does not look as if he needed the kindly hint given him by his friend Hawley, in one of the most remarkable letters of that day,[1] not to fall into the error imputed "to the Massachusetts gentlemen, *and especially of the town of Boston*," of assuming big and haughty airs, and affecting to dictate and take the lead in continental measures.

[1] Vol. ix. p. 344.

This impression was propagated by their own tories, it seems, in order to create a prejudice against the delegates beforehand, and increase the difficulties in their way.

Of the issue of the congress, Mr. Adams was not sanguine. In another letter to his wife, he said: —

"I must prepare for a journey to Philadelphia. A long journey, indeed! But if the length of the journey was all, it would be no burden. But the consideration of what is to be done is of great weight. Great things are wanted to be done, and little things only, I fear, can be done. I dread the thought of the congress's falling short of the expectations of the continent, but especially of the people of the province.

"Vapors, avaunt! I will do my duty, and leave the event. If I have the approbation of my own mind, whether applauded or censured, blessed or cursed by the world, I will not be unhappy."

He complained that his circuit yielded him less profit than ever before, and, as a consequence, they must be more frugal.

"I must entreat you, my dear partner in all the joys and sorrows, prosperity and adversity of my life, to take a part with me in the struggle. I pray God for your health, and entreat you to rouse your whole attention to the family, the stock, the farm, the dairy. Let every article of expense, which can possibly be spared, be retrenched. Keep the hands attentive to their business, and let the most prudent measures of every kind be adopted and pursued with alacrity and spirit."

In the midst of these anxieties, public and private, the time approached for his departure. He reached home from the circuit about the middle of July, and on the 10th of the next month set off, with all the delegates elected, excepting James Bowdoin, on their way through Connecticut to New York. The journey was an ovation.[1] On all sides committees and clubs of the patriots crowded to escort them from town to town, and to receive them as public guests. A good idea of the scene may be gathered from Mr. Adams's account of it in his "Diary." Yet, underneath all this cordiality lay anxieties and distrust of the event,

[1] The only time the writer ever incurred the indignation of his grandfather, was by his expression of surprise at the extent of these ceremonies, which he happened to find set forth in high colors in an old newspaper. He was then a boy, and knew no better. But he never forgot the reproof.

thicker and thicker sown the further they went. Mr. Adams's presaging mind saw already that, as a remedy to the difficulties they labored under, the congress would fail. To his colleague, Samuel Adams, he might say, in confidence: "I suppose we must go to Philadelphia, and enter into non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreements. But they will be of no avail. We shall have to resist by force."[1] But this language would have been highly dangerous to any prospect of union, if it had been indulged in by either of them at New York or Philadelphia, whilst John Dickinson was writing to Josiah Quincy, Jr., a strong caution against "breaking the line of opposition" in Massachusetts. Alexander McDougal warned them, at New York, that episcopal and aristocratic prejudices were already in arms to keep out what was designated as the "levelling spirit" of New England. And Philip Livingston was not courteous enough to repress, in their presence, the manifestation of his own sympathy with those apprehensions. Arrived in New Jersey, they found the spirit pretty high at Princeton, the scene of Dr. Witherspoon's labors, but they were told to be wary as they drew nearer to Philadelphia. Five miles from that city, at Frankford, they were welcomed by a considerable number of persons who had come out ostensibly to do them honor, but really in part to apprise them exactly of the suspicions afloat respecting them. The cry among the vacillating and the timid was, that the Massachusetts men were aiming at nothing short of independence. Even the calm spirit of Washington had been troubled by it; nor was it quieted until after a long and free interchange of sentiment with the delegates. The effect of all this was to inspire them with great prudence. They talked so moderately that the dashing and careless bravado of some of the delegates from Virginia and Carolina took the wind entirely out of their sails. "What is the king's promise?" asked young Edward Rutledge. "I should have no regard to his word. It is not worth any thing." Harrison gave, as a toast: "A constitutional death to Lords Bute, Mansfield, and North!" In comparison with the high tone of these men, Joseph Reed remarked that the New England men seemed mere milk-

[1] Pitkin's *Political and Civil History of the United States*, vol. i. p. 277.

sops.[1] Yet the sequel showed that the latter were not the first to tire on the way!

In truth, the attitude of the Massachusetts delegates was at this moment quite peculiar. The specific object of the assembly, to which they had come, was *consultation*. On the part of all the other colonies this was, comparatively, an easy task. They were yet exempt from the immediate signs of Great Britain's indignation. They were at liberty to promise as much or as little as they pleased; or they might, if they chose, leave Massachusetts alone, to serve as the scapegoat of the sins of the whole continent. They had not yet been sinners beyond the hope of pardon. But to her, it was *help, or we sink*. She was, in fact, a suppliant to have her cause made the common cause. Her delegates were bound to convince their associates that their own safety, that precious flower, could be plucked only out of the nettle of her danger; that, although the armed hand now rested on her alone, it would inevitably spread over all English America, if all did not unite their strength to remove it. This task was rendered the more difficult from the great uncertainty whether even that union would effect the object, or serve further than to bring down a common ruin. "We have a delicate course to steer," Mr. Adams wrote to his wife, "between too much activity and too much insensibility, in our critical, interested situation. I flatter myself, however, that we shall conduct our embassy in such a manner as to merit the approbation of our country. It has taken us much time to get acquainted with the tempers, views, characters, and designs of persons, and to let them into the circumstances of our province." Yet of one thing at least the delegates were sure, and that was of the sympathy of all.

In the midst of these anxieties, as often happens in the affairs of men,[2] an event over which the delegates could have no control did more to help them than all their labors. Out of some

[1] This remark seems to have somewhat puzzled Lord Mahon. It can only be understood by a study of sectional characteristics, and by taking into the account the causes of the unusual self-restraint of the New England men.

[2] "A quoi tiennent les choses humaines? Les plus petits ressorts influent sur le destin des empires, et le changent. Tels sont les jeux du hasard, qui se riant de la vaine prudence des mortels, relève les espérances des uns, pour renverser celles des autres." Such is the moral of the infidel Frederick of Prussia, when the death of the Empress Elizabeth saved his kingdom from annihilation!

preparations made by General Gage to secure his position by fortifying Boston neck, a rumor had been widely spread, until it reached Philadelphia, that he had cruelly turned his cannon upon the unoffending citizens, and devoted them to an indiscriminate slaughter. The indignation which this wild tale created overcame what was left of hesitation. Mr. Adams describes it to his wife in his usual vigorous style.

"When the horrid news was brought here of the bombardment of Boston, which made us completely miserable for two days, we saw proofs of the sympathy and the resolution of the continent. War! war! war! was the cry; and it was pronounced in a tone which would have done honor to the oratory of a Briton or a Roman. If it had proved true, you would have heard the thunder of an American congress."

The contradiction of the story came in time to restore the excited men to calmness, but it did not place them just where they were before. The strong resolutions transmitted by the county of Suffolk, including Boston, had been received with favor, and responded to by votes, the tenor of which certainly encouraged the people to resist by force, if it did not absolutely pledge support. "This day," says Mr. Adams, in his "Diary" of the 17th of September, "convinced me that America will support the Massachusetts, or perish with her." "I saw the tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave, pacific Quakers of Pennsylvania," he tells his wife. With great unanimity the voice went forth that the poor people of Boston were to be encouraged to persevere, and pecuniary contributions were to be made for their relief, until the united efforts of North America could avail to bring round a change in the policy of Britain, with better men for ministers and wiser measures. The ship was moving steadily, but, after all, it was going rather slowly for the eager expectation of Massachusetts. "Fifty gentlemen meeting together, all strangers, are not acquainted with each other's language, ideas, views, designs. They are, therefore, jealous of each other, fearful, timid, skittish." "The art and address of ambassadors from a dozen belligerent powers of Europe, nay, of a conclave of cardinals at the election of a pope, or of the princes in Germany at the choice of an emperor, would not exceed the specimens we have seen. Yet the congress all profess the same political principles! They all profess

to consider our province as suffering in the common cause; and, indeed, they seem to feel for us as if for themselves."

Great care was necessary to avoid stopping the movement by showing too great ardor to promote it. "We have had numberless prejudices to remove here. We have been obliged to act with great delicacy and caution. We have been obliged to keep ourselves out of sight, and to feel pulses and sound the depths; to insinuate our sentiments, designs, and desires by means of other persons; sometimes of one province and sometimes of another." Such are some of the revelations made by Mr. Adams to his friends at home, at the time. "Patience, forbearance, long-suffering, are the lessons taught here for our province, and, at the same time, absolute and open resistance to the new government. I wish I could convince gentlemen of the danger or impracticability of this as fully as I believe it myself." After all, the best which they could hope to obtain would not be adequate to their wants. "I may venture to tell you that I believe we shall agree to non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation, but not to commence so soon as I could wish. Indeed, all this would be insufficient for your purpose. A more adequate support and relief should be adopted. But I tremble for fear we should fail of obtaining it."

To his friend, General Palmer, who had presided at the meeting which had passed the Suffolk resolves already alluded to, and who was now a representative from his own town in the provincial congress, he explained the prevailing opinions in the following letter: —

Philadelphia, 26 September, 1774.

"Before this reaches you, the sense of congress concerning your wisdom, fortitude, and temperance in the Massachusetts in general, and the county of Suffolk in particular, will be public in our country. It is the universal sense here, that the Massachusetts acts and the Murder acts ought not to be submitted to. But then, when you ask the question, what is to be done, they answer: 'Stand still. Bear with patience. If you come to a rupture with the troops, all is lost.' Resuming the first charter, absolute independency, &c., are ideas which startle people here.

"It seems to be the general opinion here, that it is practicable for us in the Massachusetts to live wholly without a legislature

and courts of justice, as long as will be necessary to obtain relief. If it is practicable, the general opinion is that we ought to bear it. The commencement of hostilities is exceedingly dreaded here. It is thought that an attack upon the troops, even though it should prove successful and triumphant, would certainly involve the whole continent in a war. It is generally thought here, that the minister would rejoice at a rupture in Boston, because that would furnish him with an excuse to the people at home, and unite them with him in an opinion of the necessity of pushing hostilities against us. On the contrary, the delegates here, and other persons from various parts are unanimously very sanguine that if Boston and the Massachusetts can possibly steer a middle course between obedience to the acts and open hostilities with the troops, the exertions of the colonies will procure a total change of measures and full redress for us. However, my friend, I cannot at this distance pretend to judge. We must leave it all to your superior wisdom.

"What you propose, of holding out some proposal which shall show our willingness to pay for our protection at sea, is a subject often mentioned in private conversation here. Many gentlemen have pursued the thought and digested their plans; but what is to be the fate of them, I cannot say. It is my opinion, Sir, that we do our full proportion towards the protection of the empire, and towards the support of the naval power. To the support of the standing army, we ought never to contribute voluntarily.

"A gentleman put into my hands, a few days ago, a plan for offering to raise two hundred thousand pounds sterling annually, to appropriate it to the maintenance of a ship of war. But is not this surrendering our liberty? I have not time, however, to discuss these questions at present. I pray God to direct, assist, and protect you and all our friends, amidst the dangers that surround you."

Great care was taken, at the time, to impress the country with the belief that the members of this body were perfectly agreed in all their deliberations; and the secrecy in which the proceedings were kept contributed to favor the idea. In point of fact, there was a general harmony in feeling, though not in

opinion. The probability of reconciliation was cherished by the greater number, who yet were far from according as to the means which might be effective to produce it. One portion relied upon the respectful, yet manly and eloquent, reasoning of their remonstrances, to soften the stony hearts of king, ministers, and parliament, whilst another trusted more to the effect upon their fears of ruin to the national interests from the refusal further to trade. Others had no faith in either motive, but were willing to make the experiment in order to satisfy their friends. Yet, whatever the diversities of sentiment, the paramount idea, which kept all the passions within a clearly defined circle, was the absolute necessity of *union*. The fear of hazarding that, equally stimulated the timid and restrained the bold. All felt that the cause of Massachusetts involved the liberties of every other colony, but all did not see alike the urgency of engaging in active measures for her support. To this hesitation it became indispensable that the more ardent of the number should defer. They cheerfully sacrificed their own strong, and as it proved just views of the crisis, and gave their assent to expedients, however insufficient in their eyes, only because they could not fail to see that, at this cost alone, were they to arrive at the general conviction of their futility, and a subsequent coöperation in a more decided system. Hence it happened that, notwithstanding the diversity in reasoning upon abstract principles, which undoubtedly prevailed, the delegates were not separated in the results of their deliberations. Joseph Galloway and James Duane signed the non-importation and non-exportation agreement, even though they regarded it as going too far, whilst Samuel and John Adams signed it too, though they thought it scarcely moving at all. Between these extremes lay the body of members who honestly believed, with Richard Henry Lee, that it would prove a complete remedy for all the troubles within three months. The consequence was substantial union, whilst to the people outside, the moral effect was that of extraordinary harmony in the policy of resistance. This accelerated that consolidation of all sections of opposition, which proved of the greatest value in the passage through the more critical periods of the struggle.

In truth, this assembly was one of the most remarkable events of the Revolution. Selected, apparently, with great care, it comprised a very large part of the best abilities then to be found

in the colonies. New and untried in the affairs of the world on any great scale, without opportunities to learn either by study or experience the art of government, homogeneous only in language and origin, it is certainly matter of surprise that in the steps they took, and the declarations of policy they placed before the world, they should have displayed so many of the highest qualities of statesmanship. The well known eulogy of Lord Chatham is not exaggerated, and contrasts singularly with the view which must now be taken of the individuals in power, by whom he was at the same moment surrounded at home. Of the list of the signers of the non-importation agreement, a very large proportion were men who proved themselves possessed of more than ordinary qualities, whilst several have earned a reputation which can die only with the decay of all mortal things. Virginia never, in any subsequent stage of her annals, brilliant with great names, shone more than now, when Washington and Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Peyton Randolph, Pendleton, and Bland, came to throw her great weight into this cause. Here was courage blended with prudence, age with youth, eloquence with wisdom, progress with conservatism. South Carolina presented Gadsden, rough, honest, impulsive, and energetic, qualified by the caution of Middleton, and relieved by the more showy rhetoric of the younger Rutledge. New England, strong in good sense, had as an orator only John Adams, but it abounded with intelligence, honesty, and the capacity for grappling with the practical business of life, and its old Puritan temper was absolutely embodied in the person of Samuel Adams. The Middle States, too, though less zealous and determined, and with a smaller proportion of marked men, furnished, in John Jay, purity of character unsurpassed in any times, united with ability, wisdom, and patriotism of the highest grade; and in James Duane, William Livingston, John Dickinson, Samuel Chase, Thomas Johnson, Cæsar Rodney, and Thomas McKean, sincerity of purpose and cautious judgment as well as practical capacity, which would not have discredited the most experienced statesmen of their day. Even Joseph Galloway, though he failed in rising to the level of public spirit which distinguished his associates, was by no means an ordinary man either in mind or character. In many assemblies of later times he would not have found his

equal. It is by his deficiency that we are the better enabled to conceive the stature of those with whom he is compared.

In this remarkable congress, however, there was less trial of those higher faculties of the mind, which determine action, than in the assemblies that followed. The main objects to be gained by it were the establishment of one organization to extend over all the colonies, and the just statement to the world of the principles upon which the common cause was to be maintained. In order to secure these, care was to be taken, first, to place in the foreground those colonies which it was vitally important to enlist in the work of identifying the cause of all with the fate of Massachusetts; secondly, to select from the members such as were best qualified to embody in words the trains of thought and feeling most likely to be approved by the largest portion of the country. Yet, in following out this policy, it happened more than once that the zealous outran the pace of their comrades, and were compelled to retrace their steps. Massachusetts was, for obvious reasons, content to remain in the background. But as the committees were organized, to whom was entrusted the preparation of the necessary papers, the results to which they first arrived, seldom proved quite satisfactory to the assembly itself. This was particularly the case with the committee appointed to draw up and report a form of petition to the king. It was composed of five persons, Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, Thomas Johnson, of Maryland, and John Rutledge, of South Carolina, a geographical distribution somewhat oblivious of the middle and most backward colonies, besides containing a majority holding opinions much in advance of the general sentiment.

What is most singular, however, is the obscurity with which the action of this committee has been covered, and the discussions carried on at a later time about the authorship of their final report. Mr. Lee, Mr. Adams, Mr. Henry, each in turn, has been named as the writer of that celebrated paper, when, in fact, neither of them had any thing to do with it. It is now known to have been the work of Mr. John Dickinson.[1]

[1] This is settled by Mr. Dickinson himself in a letter to Dr. Logan, printed in the American Quarterly Review, vol. i. pp. 413–415. Yet it has been ascribed to Mr. Adams by a distinguished person in an historical discourse within a few years!

But, when the committee was made, he was not even a member of the congress; and the fact is indubitable that a draft had been prepared and reported before he was appointed. Who wrote that draft, and what became of it, has never been positively ascertained. Mr. Adams, when appealed to late in life, both by Mr. Jay and Mr. Jefferson, seemed to have lost all recollection of it. By a single entry in his "Diary," it appears that he spent the evening of the 11th of October with Mr. Henry, consulting about the matter, and that this gentleman then alluded to the deficiencies of his education, as if in the way of objection to undertake the labor. This, however, is only an inference, and does not prove that he may not have written it. That Mr. Adams himself did not, can scarcely be doubted, for in none of his memoranda of his various productions, early or late, is there the slightest allusion to any paper of the kind. Neither would his interference have been consistent with his well-known policy to enlist leading men from the other colonies, especially from Virginia, by putting them forward as advocates of the cause. Notwithstanding that no traces of it remain among Mr. Lee's papers,[1] the probabilities are strong that the draft was prepared by him, not without some suggestions from the ardent minds of the other two. As a very natural consequence, it proved unacceptable to the temper of the Middle States, in which the hope of reconciliation was yet unshaken. Mr. Dickinson, whose opinions nearest symbolized those of the majority at this moment, describes it as having been written "in language of asperity, very little according with the conciliatory disposition of congress." After some debate it was, in substance, rejected by returning it to the same committee, reinforced by the addition of Mr. Dickinson. The hint was taken, and the task of framing a new paper imposed by the committee upon the new-comer. He executed it, and his draft was reported to congress on the 24th of October. It was adopted, with some amendments, and signed on the very last day of its session. Thus is the mystery, in a measure, solved. But at this day it would not be without its interest to those who trace the growth of opinions, could the opportunity have been retained to compare the rejected with the accepted work. Which of the two Mr. Adams must have preferred, it is not difficult to conjecture.

[1] At least such is the fair inference from the course of his biographer, who must be presumed to have fully examined them.

There had been, however, another committee organized, upon which the influence of Mr. Adams's mind is more distinctly visible. This was the large one, embracing about half the congress, charged with the duty of preparing a formal declaration of rights, and a specification of the instances in which they had been violated. Among its members were both the Adamses, John Jay, and James Duane, of New York, R. H. Lee, Pendleton, and Patrick Henry, of Virginia, Galloway, of Pennsylvania, Rodney and McKean, of Delaware, and John Rutledge, of South Carolina; and at its sessions, to accommodate which the congress, for a time, suspended its deliberations, some of the most elaborate discussions were holden that took place. If we may judge of their nature from the meagre specimens left in Mr. Adams's notes, the neglect to transmit a full record of these seminal principles of a great empire has been a public loss. As usual, he is himself found tracing effects to their ultimate causes. Quite averse to resting the justice of the American claims upon the mere offspring of man's will, upon the construction put upon an unwritten local law, or upon grants and charters derived from an equivocal sovereignty, he preferred to include an appeal to those general ideas of natural right, so clearly and broadly laid down, not long afterwards, in the Declaration of Independence. For this course, however, Pennsylvania and New York were by no means prepared. After passing through a double alembic of criticism in a sub-committee, of which we know only that Mr. Adams and J. Rutledge were two of the members, and in the grand committee, this point was submitted, on the 22d of September, to the congress itself for its decision, in a report, no copy of which is believed to be extant, although twelve, one for the use of each colony, were ordered to be prepared. Two days afterwards it was determined, against the views of Mr. Adams, that nothing should be said, at that time, of natural rights. This is said to have been caused by the influence of the conservative Virginia members, still anxious to avoid stumbling-blocks in the way of a possible return of good feeling between sovereign and people. So the congress directed that no grievances should be stated, having their origin beyond the acts of Parliament passed since 1763.

But another, and a still more difficult question, sprung up to

divide opinions in the committee. This related to the extent to which the authority of Parliament should be conceded. It had been the Gordian knot of the controversy ever since the Stamp Act, from which it must be admitted that there had never been much uniformity in the popular mode of extrication. Whilst some had endeavored to draw a faint and shadowy line of distinction between internal and external taxation, which could never have been practically preserved, others had gone a step further, and denied the power to tax alone, whilst a third class felt disposed, with Gadsden and Samuel Adams, to dispute all authority whatsoever. Between these conflicting views, it seemed next to impossible to find some common position upon which all might equally stand. Mr. Adams, who had been called to ponder much on this subject in the course of the controversy with Governor Hutchinson, and also, several years before that, in drawing up a set of instructions to the Boston representatives, now revived the idea which he had then first presented. This denied the power of legislation in Parliament as a matter of right, and most emphatically the claim of taxation for revenue in any form; but it affirmed a disposition to *consent* to the necessary operation of such acts as might be intended in good faith to secure a monopoly to the mother country of the commercial advantages of their external trade. John Rutledge seems to have caught at this proposition as a mode of escape from their dilemma. It was put into the form of a resolution, was reported as the fourth of their series, and finally passed the ordeal of the assembly. It now stands in the following words: —

"Resolved, that the foundation of English liberty and of all free government is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council; and as the English colonists are not represented, and from their local and other circumstances cannot be properly represented in the British Parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several provincial legislatures, where their right of representation can alone be preserved, in all cases of taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of their sovereign, in such manner as has been heretofore used and accustomed. But, *from the necessity of the case*, and a regard to the mutual interests of both countries, we cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts

of parliament as are, *bonâ fide*, restrained to the regulation of our external commerce, for the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the mother country, and the commercial benefits of its respective members; excluding every idea of taxation, internal or external, for raising a revenue on the subjects in America without their consent."

What is this but independence? asked Hutchinson, when the idea was presented by the same person six years earlier; and Galloway repeated the question now. It wholly satisfied nobody. Mr. Duane insisted upon moving that congress should admit the authority of Parliament to regulate trade; and it appears that he carried five colonies with him on a division, whilst five only voted against it. Two colonies were neutralized, one of which was Massachusetts herself. Mr. Adams could not even persuade two of his immediate associates to deny this authority; and yet the fourth article of the declaration of rights, as drawn up by him, founding it only upon consent, finally received the sanction of the whole assembly. As viewed at the present day, the main objection to it is, that it conceded too much, rather than too little, to the commercial temper of the age. Happy had it been for Great Britain had she remained satisfied even with these terms, instead of rejecting them with so much disdain. For she would have retained her hold upon the affections of the colonists, whilst she would have sacrificed less than she has since of her own accord surrendered. The monopoly of the colonial trade offered in this resolution is now regarded in England as contrary to the recognized principles of their system, and therefore not to be adhered to. Such are the vicissitudes of opinion, which so often in public affairs tend to diminish confidence in the most vaunted results of the sagacity of mere practical statesmen. By rejecting this proposition, because it savored of colonial independence, she in fact insured the result which she strove to prevent. Whereas, by conceding then what she has now abandoned voluntarily, in adopting the general principles of free trade, she would have woven the chains of mutual dependence from the enjoyment of reciprocal benefits so tightly, that the colonists would have been deterred, for a long time, at least, from aspiring to any thing better than her protection.

This congress continued its sessions a little less than two

months. The declared purpose of its meeting was consultation, and the members did not go much beyond their commission. They carefully matured their public papers, explanatory of their motives and objects, and justifying themselves in the resistance thus far made to the new policy of the mother country. To this extent they earned for themselves an enduring reputation for wisdom, patriotism, and statesmanship. Not so with the only act which they performed. Their non-importation, non-exportation, and non-consumption agreement can scarcely be defended on any grounds. It was advocated by the greater number as a measure which would inevitably precipitate Great Britain into bankruptcy, an opinion not uncommon at that time in the mother country, likewise; just as if the foreign trade of any country could extend beyond the surplus of her products, the total loss of which may create great temporary inconvenience to individuals or classes, but can scarcely involve a whole community in ruin. The history of countries like China and Japan proves clearly enough that it is by no means essential to national existence that they should trade with outside nations at all, however promotive this may be of their wealth and prosperity. As a measure of hostility, this act had the double misfortune of forfeiting the character of conciliation, whilst it effected little as a means of offence. On the other hand, the operation of it upon the colonies themselves, then on the eve of a conflict, was most adverse. They absolutely needed the very things from which they were cutting themselves off, in exchange for those of which they had more than enough, and which they could turn to no account in warfare. No people, probably, ever went into a struggle more utterly unprepared with means of attack of every kind, than the Americans, in 1776. The previous two years, which might, by proper foresight, have been improved to some extent in providing them, were thus thrown away by this *telum imbelle sine ictu* of non-intercourse; and it is scarcely risking a great deal to affirm, that, had it not been for the active interference of France, the contest must, by reason of this very mistake alone, have terminated disastrously to the colonies.

Mr. Adams was not one of those who had the smallest faith in this measure, as an instrument of reconciliation. He would have preferred to limit the pledge to non-exportation, without quite seeing the injurious operation of that. He assented to the

whole because others, believing in its efficacy, demanded it, and because he thus sealed a bond of union with them for greater ends in the future. The general result of the meeting had been to relieve his mind of the burden which it bore when he started to attend it. At all events, the main point had been gained. Massachusetts no longer stood exposed alone to all the thunderbolts. Her cause had been made the cause of eleven colonies, at least in substance, if not in form. Although he had failed in obtaining the pledge he solicited, to take up arms in certain contingencies which he saw likely to happen in his own colony, the meeting of a second assembly to concert further joint action, in case the present appeal should prove fruitless of good, promised well as a provision for the future. A skilfully devised plan to paralyze future resistance, offered by Joseph Galloway, which captivated a large number of the more cautious and timid of the assembly, had been defeated, and the author of it unmasked. Above all, and more than all, the foundations of a grand American combination had been laid, and the men upon whom its success would depend had been brought together, had been made to understand and to esteem each other. Thus much, at least, was sure.

But apart from these considerations of public gain, Mr. Adams, who, previous to this time, had scarcely crossed the limits of his own colony, had derived nothing but pleasure from this expedition, and the kind and cordial reception he had everywhere, in private, met with. His "Diary" gives a lively picture of the generous hospitality of the citizens of Philadelphia. His way of life is described in a letter to his wife. "We go to congress at nine, and there we stay, most earnestly engaged in debates upon the most abstruse mysteries of state, until three in the afternoon; then we adjourn, and go to dine with some of the nobles of Pennsylvania at four o'clock, and feast upon ten thousand delicacies, and sit drinking Madeira, Claret, and Burgundy till six or seven, and then go home fatigued to death with business, company, and care. Yet I hold out surprisingly." It was well, perhaps, for those who had entered a path beset with so many thorns, that its opening should be strewed with a few flowers. Mr. Adams started on his return home upon the 28th of October, and in his "Diary" for that day he thus records it. "Took our departure in a very

great rain, from the happy, the peaceful, the elegant, the hospitable and polite city of Philadelphia. It is not very likely that I shall ever see this part of the world again, but I shall ever retain a most grateful, pleasing sense of the many civilities I have received in it; and shall think myself happy to have an opportunity of returning them."

His return to Massachusetts was not calculated to make the pleasant impressions, thus received, less vivid. For in New York he learned that the proceedings of congress had created a reaction in the popular mind. The non-intercourse was not well received, a fact of which pamphlet writers were industriously making use to effect an alienation from the common cause. Dr. Myles Cooper and Dr. Isaac Wilkins, both of them zealous churchmen, distinguished themselves by interweaving with the most absolute doctrines, adroit and well reasoned appeals to the merchants and farmers against the non-intercourse measures. Among a commercial people such arguments will never fail of gaining hearers. In this instance, they proved so far successful, that the wavering majority in the assembly decided not to ratify the proceedings, not to thank the colonial delegates of the last, nor to elect any others for the next congress; and the better to secure the popular concurrence, they originated certain remonstrating measures of their own, more calculated, as they pretended, to obtain redress of their grievances, and at the same time, to save them in the good graces of the authorities at home.

Luckily for America, those authorities were at this time both deaf and blind, so that this threatening scission was prevented. But this happened afterwards. Mr. Adams as yet saw, in passing through, only the discouraging side of the picture. And when at last he reached his quiet home and family in his native town, he found it was not to get rest from his public cares, nor to return to the labors of his profession. Not many days elapsed before the provincial congress, then sitting at Watertown, summoned him to attend them. This duty, at first temporary, was made permanent by his election soon afterwards to serve in that body as a representative for Braintree. Accordingly, he continued to take an active part in their deliberations until the day of their dissolution. This was on the tenth of December. Two days afterwards a champion of the prerogative entered the lists

in the Boston newspapers, whose efforts were soon hailed with so much exultation among the loyal minority, and whose productions, as they successively appeared, were so assiduously circulated, not in New England alone, but likewise in New York and other colonies south, that the popular side began to feel the necessity of some public refutation. Massachusettensis wielded, perhaps, the keenest weapons of controversy of all those used on the British side during the Revolution. Mr. Adams, stimulated the more, perhaps, by the suspicion that it was his old friend, Sewall, who was writing, took up the gauntlet which had thus been thrown down, and the elaborate papers of Novanglus, in the Boston Gazette, were the result. They appeared weekly throughout the winter of 1774 and until cut off by the appeal to that very different species of arbitration first attempted at Lexington and Concord. The substance of them was afterwards collected and published by Almon, in the "Remembrancer," under the title of "A History of the Dispute with America," and they have since been twice reprinted prior to their reproduction in the present collection. Their value consists in the strong contemporaneous view they give of the origin of the struggle, and of the policy of Bernard and Hutchinson, which contributed so much to bring it on. No publication of the time compares with them in extent of research into the principles of the ancient law, and in the vigorous application of them to the question at issue. Yet, as literary productions, they partake of the character common to all the author's writings, always prompted by the immediate necessity, and regardless of the polishing labor, which, when applied to give duration to earnest and deep thoughts, is never thrown away. They want systematic treatment of the subject, and exactness in the style. The language is rather energetic than elegant, and the feeling is more cherished than the rhetoric. In one respect they are particularly important, as they develop the historical argument which was relied upon in the noted controversy with Hutchinson, the only argument, it should be observed, upon which the Revolution itself, at least in Massachusetts, can be logically justified.

So passed the winter. Prior to their adjournment, the provincial congress had elected the four old delegates, and John Hancock, instead of James Bowdoin, to serve in the second

continental congress, which had been appointed to meet at Philadelphia in May. The aspect of things was very fast changing. The king had seen Hutchinson, and received from him confirmation of his own impression, that force was the only remedy for the troubles. A new parliament had come together, with a large majority breathing high indignation at what they now declared the insulting contumacy of the colonies. The prime minister, facile, and ever halting behind opportunity, had seemed, indeed, to waver for a moment, by moving a proposition which, had it been sincerely pressed and supported in a right spirit, might perhaps yet have turned the current toward peace; but finding himself exposed to a general burst of disapprobation from his own friends, he excused himself by a subterfuge, which deprived his action of all merit. Divide and conquer, was the motto which he acknowledged, and not union and reconciliation. Concurrently with this singularly inauspicious exposure, came measures of the strongest nature, which were rapidly pressed through against a feeble opposition in both Houses. The cry was not what New York had hoped, for a hearing and for gentle counsels; it was all hot for the transmission of more regiments, at the first sight of which the cowardly faction, miscalled patriots, would run from one end of America to the other. Not such had continued the opinion of General Gage, although before leaving home he had held it as confidently as the most supercilious of his countrymen. An unlucky experiment of this kind, inconsiderately made, had ended by putting the royal cause in a worse condition than ever. The bloodshed at Lexington and Concord had acted like magic upon the passions of the people throughout the continent. It was considered as a proof of the wanton hostility of the government at home, and ominous of their determination to put down all further remonstrance by main force. From one end of the colonies to the other, the spirit of resistance broke forth boldly. Many, everywhere, flew at once to arms. Almost all lost confidence in the return of peace. There had been no adequate provocation for this resort to violence. It was cruel, arbitrary, vindictive. New York, which had swayed so strongly one way in the autumn, now swayed, with equal impetus, to the other side. The hopes of keeping her out of the union, then sanguinely entertained, were no longer to be counted on. All

complaints of the action of the first congress were forgotten. A sense of wrong usurped the dominion of every mind.

In the midst of this agitation, Mr. Adams set out once more on his way to Philadelphia. He had taken pains to go over the ground of the skirmish and pursuit, and to gather from those residing near it all the particulars they could furnish. His inference was that the Rubicon was crossed; and, from that time forth, that no logic would avail other than that coming from the cannon's mouth. Agitated to fever by his reflections, he had not travelled out of the limits of Massachusetts before he began to observe the traces of the electric influence of this event. From Hartford he wrote home, that "he had no doubts now of the union." "Lord North would be certainly disappointed in his expectation of seducing New York. Dr. Cooper had fled on board of a man-of-war, and the tories were humbled in the dust." The report made by the council of that colony, not without its bitterness for the blunders to which they imputed the change, clearly shows the extent to which they felt it.[1] Arrived at that city, Mr. Adams wrote that "it would take sheets of paper to give a description of the reception the delegates had found there. The militia were all in arms, and almost the whole city out to meet them." The tories were put to flight as effectually as General Gage's *mandamus* counsellors at Boston. "Such a spirit was never seen there." Yet, although the prospect of a union of the colonies was indeed promising, and the spirit was great, he felt anxious, "because there was always more smoke than fire, more noise than music." But this uneasiness did not outlast his return to Philadelphia. From there he wrote that his health was not so good as before, and he had harder service. "Our business is more extensive and complicated; more affecting and hazardous; *but our unanimity will not be less.*"

If things were thus brightened at Philadelphia, the case was otherwise with the family he had left around his domestic hearth. At his cottage, in Braintree, was his wife with four little children, the eldest not ten years old. The male population within a circuit of a hundred miles, roused by the affair at Lexington, was gathered in arms around the town of

[1] See this remarkable document in Force's *American Archives*, fourth series, vol. ii. c. 459, 460.

Boston, whilst General Gage, deterred from distant expeditions by his ill success on that occasion, as well as by the array forming against him, contented himself with gathering what supplies he could from the most accessible places. Braintree, stretching for a long distance on the shore, with its shallow bay well adapted to boat transportation, seemed admirably fitted to invite depredations. Such was the apprehension of the inhabitants nearest the water, that many of them left their homes and removed some distance further inland. In one of Mrs. Adams's letters to her husband, she speaks of the widow of Josiah Quincy, Jr., become so within ten days, and several of the females of the family, as having taken refuge with her for the night, from an alarm. And, in a later one, she gives so vivid a picture of a scene that had then just taken place, that it well deserves to be handed down as a memorial of these times: —

"Braintree, 24 May, 1775.

"I suppose you have had a formidable account of the alarm we had last Sunday morning. When I rose, about six o'clock, I was told that the drums had been some time beating, and that three alarm-guns were fired; that Weymouth bell had been ringing, and Mr. Weld's was then ringing. I immediately sent off an express to know the occasion, and found the whole town in confusion. Three sloops and one cutter had come out and dropped anchor just below Great Hill. It was difficult to tell their designs. Some supposed they were coming to Germantown; others, to Weymouth. People, women, children, from the iron works, came flocking down this way. Every woman and child driven off from below my father's. My father's family flying; the doctor's in great distress, as you may well imagine, for my aunt had her bed thrown into a cart, into which she got herself, and ordered the boy to drive her off to Bridgewater, which he did. The report to them was that three hundred had landed, and were upon their march up into town. The alarm flew like lightning, and men from all parts came flocking down, till two thousand were collected.

"But, it seems, their expedition was to Grape Island, for Levett's hay. There it was impossible to reach them for want of boats. But the sight of so many persons, and the firing at them, prevented their getting more than three tons of hay, though

they had carted much more down to the water. At last a lighter was mustered, and a sloop from Hingham, which had six port-holes. Our men eagerly jumped on board, and put off for the island. As soon as the troops perceived it, they decamped. Our people landed upon the island, and in an instant set fire to the hay, which, with the barn, was soon consumed — about eighty tons, it is said. We expect soon to be in continual alarms, till something decisive takes place. . . .

"Our house has been, upon this alarm, the same scene of confusion that it was upon the former. Soldiers coming in for a lodging, for breakfast, for supper, for drink, &c. Sometimes refugees from Boston, tired and fatigued, seek an asylum for a day, a night, a week. You can hardly imagine how we live. Yet,

> "To the houseless child of want
> Our doors are open still;
> And though our portions are but scant,
> We give them with good will."

My best wishes attend you, both for your health and happiness; and that you may be directed into the wisest and best measures for our safety, and the security of our posterity. I wish you were nearer to us. We know not what a day will bring forth, nor what distress one hour may throw us into. Hitherto, I have been able to maintain a calmness and presence of mind; and hope I shall, let the exigency of the time be what it will."

To a man with the tender sensibilities of Mr. Adams towards the members of his own household, this letter must have been deeply affecting. But he had a just confidence in his wife, a confidence which never wavered so long as she lived; and he also relied upon the protection of the native population, which swarmed at once on any point upon the first rumor of danger. In the mean time he was doing his duty. His mind, as usual, was already far in advance of events, musing on probable results. On the 10th of June, he wrote that the congress had business to keep it through the year. "No assembly ever had a greater number of great objects before them. Provinces, nations, empires, are small things before us. *I wish we were good architects.*"

Overleaping the conflict, of which the din was just then commencing, he was speculating upon the nature of the edifice about to rise from the surrounding ruins. Yet, in congress, things had advanced scarcely even to the point of irreconcilable hostility to England. The public sentiment of the Middle States had made progress, it is true; but the usual consequence was happening, a secession of the wavering and irresolute, who had, thus far, appeared to keep up pretty well. To acquiesce in further measures of resistance to the British authority was likely to involve the hazard of life and fortune. This was a step further than many had yet contemplated. In all civil convulsions, there is a class of men who put off taking a side as long as they can, for the purpose of saving a chance to solve the interesting question, which will prove the strongest. This naturally leads them to oppose, with all their might, any and every measure likely to precipitate their decision. Already, at the first congress, both the Adamses had been marked by these persons as partisans of extreme, if not treasonable opinions. And the impression was not likely to be less, now that they came back bearing letters from the provincial government of their colony, communicating the particulars of their distressing situation; the latest intelligence, furnished them by their agent in London, of the summary rejection of all the petitions, and the determination to resort to force to put down all further opposition; the details of the action at Lexington and Concord; the measures which had been adopted to organize an army in self-defence; and, upon the back of all, a solicitation to congress for advice and assistance in the great difficulties in which they were involved. Close upon the heels of this application, followed a request from the city and county of New York for instructions how to prepare against the danger, of which tidings had come in advance, of a large accession of British troops. Then came the startling intelligence of the seizure of Ticonderoga, by Ethan Allen, involving the prospect of reprisals in that quarter from Canada. All these events betokened one thing, and one only. That was War. It showed, as if with sunlight, that no other resource was left to escape subjection.

Mr. Adams had, for some time, foreseen this result, though it it is a great mistake to imagine that he had ever acted with an intent to produce or even to accelerate it. To his mind, it

had taken the shape of an unavoidable calamity, which might deprive him of all the harvest from a hardly earned professional reputation; a calamity brought on by the evil counsellors who had stimulated the mother country to its aggressive policy, and not by those who, in self-defence, had been driven to resist it. But having once settled the point, that no escape was left with honor, he conceived it the wisest policy to meet the crisis boldly. His plan has been so clearly explained in his "Autobiography," that it would be superfluous to reproduce it here. Sufficient that it was not less sagacious than comprehensive. His first proposal was, that the armed assemblage actually around Boston, which Massachusetts was endeavoring to organize, should be forthwith adopted by the congress as the army of the United Colonies. It was met on the threshold, by a proposition of John Dickinson, to try one more effort at reconciliation in the form of a last appeal to the magnanimity of George the Third, by another "dutiful and humble petition." With the experience before him of the fate of the previous experiment, all this appeared to Mr. Adams as the merest drivel, at the expense of much valuable time for preparation. He, therefore, resisted it strenuously. But it availed nothing. Dickinson was yet the master spirit, whose exhortations swayed the middle colonies; so it was determined once more to supplicate the king.

But although Mr. Adams was defeated on the main question, his arguments were not without their effect in procuring important incidental concessions to his views. If the tone of the majority was somewhat irresolute, it was very far from bordering on the abject or servile. Dickinson could only carry his point by agreeing to have it connected with measures providing for the possibility of its failure. On the 26th of May, the resolution, authorizing the preparation of the second petition, was adopted, but it was tied with others, proclaiming the necessity of immediately putting the colonies, and especially New York, now the most threatened, in a state of defence. And the reason given for this was, the great doubt entertained by congress, whether any conciliatory proposal would meet with favor. So encouraging was this deemed by Mr. Adams, that, three days afterwards, he ventured to write home his positive belief that "congress would support the Massachusetts. The military spirit running through the continent was amazing. Colonel

Washington appeared every day *in his uniform*, and, by his great experience and abilities in military matters, was of much service to all." Washington was ever moderate and taciturn, so that his proceeding might well be regarded as significant. He was as yet commissioned only to deliberate and determine matters in a civil capacity. His dress was his mode of expressing his conviction that the time for another sort of action had arrived; and that he was ready to take his part even in that.

Yet Mr. Adams sometimes doubted. On the 30th, he was not so sanguine as he had been. "Our debates and deliberations," he wrote to his wife, "are tedious. From nine to four, five, and once near six. Our determinations very slow; I hope, sure. The congress will support us, but in their own way; not precisely in that way which I could wish, but in a better way than we could well expect, considering what a heterogeneous body it is." But now came more events to press the hesitating into action of some sort. On the last date named, a letter arrived from the Massachusetts convention, which set forth their disorganized condition, and earnestly prayed for "explicit advice respecting the taking up and exercising the powers of civil government." It went so far even as to declare their readiness to *submit* to such a general plan as the congress might direct for the colony. It was plain to all that things could not stay as they were a great while; yet the feelings pulled two ways. The members were forced to act, and yet they wanted to wait to hear once more from England, if haply good might come of the bran-new batch of addresses they were preparing to send over. So, concurrently with the reference of the application of Massachusetts to one committee, they organized four others, through which to petition the king, and the people of England, and of Ireland, and of Jamaica; and yet one further committee, ominous enough, to bring in an estimate of the money which it might be necessary to raise.

Then Mr. Adams gave his friend, Colonel Palmer, a hint concerning the difficulties in the way. "The colonies," he said, "are not yet ripe to assume the whole government, legislative and executive. They dread the introduction of anarchy, as they call it." He went on to point out the obstacles. "In this province, indeed, in this city, there are three persons, a Mr. W., who is very rich and very timid; the provost of the

college," (Dr. Smith,) "who is supposed to be distracted between a strong passion for lawn sleeves, and a stronger passion for popularity, which is very necessary to support the reputation of his Episcopal college; and one Israel Pemberton, who is at the head of the Quaker interest; these three make an interest here which is lukewarm, but they are all obliged to lie low for the present." "This day," added the writer, at the end, "has been spent in debating a manifesto setting forth the causes of our taking arms. There is some spunk in it." It does not seem to have been adopted just then. But the agitation of it was surely significant of change.

On the 9th of June, the congress, after long debate, and much consultation with her delegates, got so far as to answer the application of Massachusetts for advice, by recommending that "no obedience being due to the act of parliament for altering their charter, nor to any officers who endeavor to subvert that charter, letters should be written to the people in the several towns requesting them to elect representatives to an assembly, who should, in their turn, elect a council, and these two bodies should exercise the powers of government for the time." Here, again, was a great step forward. But besides asking for advice respecting their government, which had brought this answer, the provincial convention had intimated that, inasmuch as the armed men collecting before Boston, many of them from other colonies, were engaged in the defence of the rights of all America, it might be most advisable for the congress to take the direction of them into their own hands. New York, too, was in a condition which demanded immediate support. Something *must* be done. In the councils of men, your sternest reasoner is necessity.

Mr. Adams now saw far enough to promise the adoption of ten thousand men in Massachusetts, and five thousand in New York. Each successive day shows the passage of some resolution tending more and more to the inevitable end, until the 15th of June, when congress had got so far as to declare itself ready to assume the army before Boston. But there was yet another necessary step, a most important one, indeed, upon which would depend the value of the whole enterprise to ages yet unborn. The multitude of men, with arms in their hands, assembled around that peninsular town, was but an ill-

disciplined crowd, liable, at a moment's warning, to vanish like the mists which sometimes hang over its harbor. If this crowd was ever to be reduced to the semblance of an army, the first thing to do was to select a head whose orders it should learn to obey. In other words, congress must determine who should be the commander-in-chief.

Here, again, it is necessary to turn to the "Autobiography," to know the share which Mr. Adams had in deciding this most material event in the history of America. Now, that the habits of three quarters of a century have done so much to fuse the feelings of the citizens of the various States into one national mould, it is not easy to measure the full extent of the sacrifice which a Massachusetts man was making in offering the command of the people of New England, some of them tried officers in former wars, to a stranger comparatively unknown, with really but small military experience, and that not of a successful nature, to recommend him. What the verdict of posterity would have been, had this experiment proved unfortunate, may readily be imagined. In the life of Mr. Adams, more than in that of most men, occur instances of this calm but decided assumption of a fearful responsibility in critical moments. But what is still more remarkable is, that they were attended with a uniformly favorable result. The question may fairly be opened, whether this should be ascribed to an overruling good fortune, or to that high species of sagacity, which, combining the knowledge of causes with the probable turn of events, reaches the expected results with as much certainty as is given to mortals in this imperfect state of being. The evidence upon which to base a just decision on this point can be found only by closely following the further development of his career.

On the 17th of June, perhaps at the very time when the infant nation was taking its baptism of blood on the field of Breed's hill, Mr. Adams was finishing a letter commenced a week before, in which he gave a clear insight into the feelings which prompted him to promote, by all means, the nomination of Washington. He says: —

"I can now inform you, that the congress have made choice of the modest and virtuous, the amiable, generous, and brave George Washington, Esquire, to be general of the American

army, and that he is to repair, as soon as possible, to the camp before Boston. *This appointment will have a great effect in cementing and securing the union of these colonies.* The continent is really in earnest in defending the country. . . .

"I begin to hope we shall not sit all summer. I hope the people of our province will treat the General with all that confidence and affection, that politeness and respect, which is due to one of the most important characters in the world. The liberties of America depend upon him, in a great degree. . . .

"I have found this congress like the last. When we first came together, I found a strong jealousy of us from New England, and the Massachusetts in particular; suspicions entertained of designs of independency, an American republic, presbyterian principles, and twenty other things. Our sentiments were heard in congress with great caution, and seemed to make but little impression. But the longer we sat, the more clearly they saw the necessity of pursuing vigorous measures. It has been so now. Every day we sit, the more we are convinced that the designs against us are hostile and sanguinary, and that nothing but fortitude, vigor, and perseverance can save us.

"But America is a great unwieldy body. Its progress must be slow. It is like a large fleet sailing under convoy. The fleetest sailors must wait for the dullest and slowest. Like a coach and six, the swiftest horses must be slackened, and the slowest quickened, that all may keep an even pace."

His wife, the confidential friend to whom he wrote of public affairs, whenever he was separated from her, had been deeply agitated during the same day by fearful events, going on so near to her that she could hear the booming of the cannon, and clearly see the conflagration which ensued. She well knew what it boded. The next day, which was Sunday, she sat down, and, yet little acquainted with the issue, tried to write concerning it, and her apprehensions of its consequences. The following letter was the result: —

"The day, perhaps the decisive day, is come, on which the fate of America depends. My bursting heart must find vent at my pen. I have just heard that our dear friend, Dr. Warren, is no more, but fell gloriously fighting for his country, saying: 'Better to die honorably in the field than ignominiously hang upon the gallows.' Great is our loss! He has distinguished

himself in every engagement, by his courage and fortitude, by animating the soldiers, and leading them on by his own example. A particular account of these dreadful, but, I hope, glorious days, will be transmitted you, no doubt, in the exactest manner.

"'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us.'

"Charlestown is laid in ashes. The battle began upon our intrenchments upon Bunker's Hill, Saturday morning, about three o'clock, and has not ceased yet; and it is now three o'clock, Sabbath afternoon.

"It is expected they will come out over the neck to-night, and a dreadful battle must ensue. Almighty God, cover the heads of our countrymen, and be a shield to our dear friends! How many have fallen, we know not. The constant roar of the cannon is so distressing that we cannot eat, drink, or sleep. May we be supported and sustained in the dreadful conflict! I shall tarry here till it is thought unsafe by my friends, and then I have secured myself a retreat at your brother's, who has kindly offered me part of his house.

"I cannot compose myself to write any further at present. I will add more as I hear further.

Tuesday Afternoon, (20th.)

"I have been so much agitated that I have not been able to write since Sabbath day. When I say that ten thousand reports are passing, vague and uncertain as the wind, I believe I speak the truth. I am not able to give you any authentic account of last Saturday, but you will not be destitute of intelligence.

"Colonel Palmer has just sent me word that he has an opportunity of conveyance. Incorrect as this scrawl will be, it shall go. I ardently pray that you may be supported through the arduous task you have before you."

The event of the seventeenth of June dissipated the last shadow of doubt in Mr. Adams's mind of the necessity of insisting for the future upon the impossibility of reconciliation. He accordingly addressed himself, with spirit, to the work of stimulating congress to take the most decisive measures of

preparation for the inevitable conflict. He exerted himself in determining the selection of the other general officers, claiming the second rank for New England in the person of Artemas Ward, but not unwilling to concede the third to Charles Lee, though a stranger and but yesterday an officer in the army of the British king; in maturing the form of commission and the instructions for the commander-in-chief; and, lastly, in superintending the preparation of the continental bills of credit which were to serve the purposes of money during the earlier stages of the struggle. Not stopping, however, with these details, he was looking, with a statesman's eye, over the vast field beyond, and mapping out the forms which the new power was to assume in the distant future. In this he was running far in advance of the prevailing opinions around him, among men who were yet engaged in polishing up the last eloquent appeals to the justice and magnanimity of a sovereign upon whom their rhetoric was wholly thrown away. With these persons, who still insisted that reconciliation was within their reach, and who therefore did their best to throw obstacles in the way of all action calculated to diminish the chances of it, it was impossible for Mr. Adams to escape controversy. John Dickinson, who threw all the weight of his influence on the side of delay, was their leader and mouthpiece, and his power over the sentiment of the middle colonies it was difficult to counteract. It was after a day spent in these conflicts, in committee of the whole, that a young man from his own colony called upon Mr. Adams, at his lodgings, and requested as a favor, inasmuch as doubts had been spread at home of his fidelity to the cause, that he might be made the bearer of confidential letters to friends in Massachusetts. Without properly considering the possibilities of interception, Mr. Adams sat down and penned what was uppermost in his mind and feelings. The result he comprised in two notes, one addressed to his wife, and the other to General James Warren, then president of the Provincial Congress.

To Mrs. Adams he said: —

"It is now almost three months since I left you; in every part of which my anxiety about you and the children, as well as our country, has been extreme. The business I have had on my mind has been as great and important as can be intrusted

to man, and the difficulty and intricacy of it prodigious. When fifty or sixty men have a constitution to form for a great empire, at the same time that they have a country of fifteen hundred miles' extent to fortify, millions to arm and train, a naval power to begin, an extensive commerce to regulate, numerous tribes of Indians to negotiate with, a standing army of twenty-seven thousand men to raise, pay, victual, and officer, I really shall pity those fifty or sixty men."

To this recapitulation of the labors actually going on in congress was attached the following: —

"P. S. I wish I had given you a complete history, from the beginning to the end, of the behavior of my compatriots. No mortal tale can equal it. I will tell you in future, but you shall keep it secret. The fidgets, the whims, the caprice, the vanity, the superstition, the irritability of some of us is enough to —

Yours."

To General Warren, he unbosomed himself even more fully, as follows: —

"24 July. I am determined to write freely to you this time. A certain great fortune and piddling genius, whose fame has been trumpeted so loudly, has given a silly cast to our whole doings. We are between hawk and buzzard. We ought to have had in our hands, a month ago, the whole legislative, executive, and judicial of the whole continent, and have completely modelled a constitution; to have raised a naval power, and opened all our ports wide; to have arrested every friend of government on the continent, and held them as hostages for the poor victims in Boston; and then opened the door as wide as possible for peace and reconciliation. After this, they might have petitioned, negotiated, addressed, &c., if they would.

"Is all this extravagant? Is it wild? Is it not the soundest policy?

"One piece of news. Seven thousand pounds of powder arrived last night. We shall send you some of it as soon as we can, but you must be patient and frugal. We are lost in the extensiveness of our field of business. We have a continental treasury to establish, a paymaster to choose, and a committee of correspondence, or safety, or accounts, or something, I know not what, that has confounded us all this day.

"Shall I hail you speaker of the House, or counsellor, or

what? What kind of an election had you? What sort of magistrates do you intend to make? Will your new legislative or executive feel bold or irresolute? Will your judicial hang, and whip, and fine, and imprison, without scruple? I want to see our distressed country once more, yet I dread the sight of devastation. You observe in your letter the oddity of a great man. He is a queer creature, but you must love his dogs if you love him, and forgive a thousand whims for the sake of the soldier and the scholar."

These confidential communications were intrusted to Mr. Hichborn, who promised to deliver them safely to their address. But, from a singular want of courage or presence of mind, he suffered them to be taken upon him at Newport, by the British. They were transmitted to Admiral Graves, commander of the squadron, from thence passed into the hands of General Gage, who caused them to be published in Boston, before sending the originals to the government at home. The effect which they produced was quite extraordinary. In Boston, the garrison, consisting of officers who had little better to do, amused themselves in making paraphrases, and otherwise turning them into ridicule. General Gage endeavored to prove from them to Lord Dartmouth the existence of a plan of rebellion long concerted in Massachusetts. The ministry regarded them as betraying the real purposes of the Americans, which shut their ears only the more firmly to the last arguments for reconciliation, carried by Mr. Dickinson through congress, against Mr. Adams's opposition. What was the gain to be expected by discriminating between classes of opinion in the colonies? There was but one purgation, and that was equally good for all the forms of this disease. It was *force*. So the petition to the king, borne by the hands of Richard Penn, was not favored even with a sign of recognition. Instead of it came a proclamation, declaring the people of the colonies in a state of rebellion, and forbidding all communication or correspondence with them, on pain of condign punishment.

Thus far the effect upon Mr. Adams, of the publication of these letters, was rather minatory than actually injurious. The case was otherwise when they came to be read in Philadelphia. They at once displayed him as drawing the outlines of an independent state, the great bugbear in the eyes of numbers,

who still clung to the hope that the last resort might be avoided. The feeling which denounced his doctrines was, moreover, animated with factitious strength by individual resentment for the strictures on persons, which had been incidentally exposed to the public eye. John Dickinson became a steady enemy for the rest of his life, whilst John Hancock, from this date, began to draw off from his colleagues of New England, and to enter into association with the more conservative members from the southern States. It is stated by more than one witness, that Mr. Adams was avoided in the streets by many as if it were contamination to speak with such a traitor. Even of his friends, several became infected with the general panic, and looked coldly upon him. At no time, and he had repeated trials of the kind, did he stand more in need of all his fortitude and self-control than upon the occasion of this sudden and unlooked for influx upon him of the general disapprobation.

This is, however, anticipating a little of the course of the narrative, which had not yet reached to the adjournment of congress for the month of August. During this recess, Mr. Adams returned home. The session had lasted ever since the 10th of May, and, during the whole period, his labors had been incessant to help organize an army for war. Neither had they been without success. The great point of the adoption of the troops before Boston, by the united colonies, had been gained. Officers had been appointed, from the commander-in-chief downward, whose duty it would be to introduce something like a continental system into the military organization. Money, or at least a representative of it, had been provided to meet the charges of pay and subsistence for the troops, and, in short, all the details of a general combination for defence had been marked out and partially perfected. This was action. But the public papers, which the same assembly issued, with one exception, perhaps, in the declaration of the causes for taking up arms, beyond giving satisfaction to those hesitating and scrupulous persons who desired to be sure that no means of conciliation had been left unattempted, produced little or no effect upon the course of affairs. A few persons might yet be found who cherished the delusion that the people of England did not sympathize with ministers, and that a recall of Lord Chatham to power would be the signal of a pacification by conceding to

America her reasonable demands. But they as little knew the indomitable pride of country of that great chief, which would have rallied the whole power of Great Britain to his aid rather than surrender one iota of her sovereignty, as they suspected the facility of Lord North, whom they were holding exclusively responsible for the evils under which they labored, when, as it now appears, he would have consented to make far greater concessions than either monarch or people could be induced to sanction. Time has at last disclosed the truth, that George the Third must be held more responsible than any other man for the American policy. To his bewildered brain and excitable nerves the petition got up by John Dickinson, under the fancy that he was holding out "an olive branch," looked more like a highwayman's pistol at his breast, demanding the surrender of the most cherished jewel of his crown.

Mr. Adams voted against the adjournment of congress. To him it was no vacation, for the interval brought with it but a variety of labor. He had been chosen one of the provincial executive council in the maimed form of government, with which Massachusetts, by the advice of congress, was endeavoring to stagger along. And his services were enlisted on the moment of his return, especially in the consultations constantly necessary between the provincial authorities and the new military leaders. Thus passed the month, with little opportunity to enjoy home, the great delight of his life. On the last day of August he started, for the third time, for Philadelphia. In the fashion of travelling of that day, it took him more than a fortnight to reach that city. His views of the changes which had taken place in congress, are given in the following letter to Mrs. Adams: —

Philadelphia, 17 September, 1775.

"I arrived here, in good health, after an agreeable journey, last Wednesday. There had not been members enough to make a House, several colonies being absent, so that I was just in time. The next day, an adequate number appeared, and congress have sat ever since.

"Georgia is now fully represented, and united to the other twelve. Their delegates are Dr. Zubly, a clergyman of the independent persuasion, who has a parish in that colony and a good deal of property. He is a native of Switzerland, is a

man of learning and ingenuity. It is said he is master of several languages, Greek, Latin, French, Dutch, and English. In the latter, it is said, he writes tolerably. He is a man of zeal and spirit, as we have already seen upon several occasions. . . .

"Mr. Bullock is another of the Georgian delegates, a sensible man, a planter, I suppose. Mr. Houston is the third, a young lawyer of modesty as well as sense and spirit, which you will say is uncommon. Mr. Jones and Dr. Hall are not yet arrived.

"Mr. Henry is made a general, in Virginia, and therefore could not come. Mr. Pendleton and Colonel Bland excused themselves on account of age and ill health. Messrs. Nelson, Wythe, and Lee[1] are chosen and are here in the stead of the other three. Wythe and Lee are inoculated. You shall hear more about them. Although they came in the room of very good men, we have lost nothing by the change, I believe."

The writer was just entering upon the second moral trial of his life. The day before the above letter was written, Mr. Dickinson had passed him in the street, and had refused to recognize his civil salutation. He noted the fact in his "Diary," as caused by the arrival of copies of the intercepted letters. The day after, congress organized the first important secret committee of nine members, and each colony of New England was represented upon it but Massachusetts. The letters had done their work of marking out the lines of distinction among the members, which circumstances had been preparing. Governor Ward wrote home to Rhode Island that they had silenced those, who were secretly opposing every decisive measure; but that the *moderate friends* had caused copies to be sent throughout Pennsylvania, in hopes, by raising the cry of independence, to throw the friends of liberty out of the new assembly. The Adamses, of Massachusetts, and the Lees, of Virginia, were the dangerous minority, who had all along aimed at independency, but whose purposes had never been so openly exposed as now. Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Silas Deane, and Mr. Jay were the exponents of the majority, and during the month of September the construction of the committees, if nothing else, shows, with tolerable clearness, the temper prevailing in the body. But whilst this was going on at Philadelphia, intelligence came from Massachusetts

[1] Francis Lightfoot Lee.

of a nature far more distressing to Mr. Adams. One of those epidemic maladies, which so often follow in the wake of military camps, and always far more fatal than the most severely fought campaign, had broken out around Boston, and spread into the neighboring towns. A brother of his, who had joined the army, had perished a month before. But now came the news that, even as he had passed over his threshold, the destroying angel was making an entrance among his household. The progress of the pestilence may be gathered from the following extracts from his wife's letters, which came to him in quick succession.

8 September.

"Since you left me, I have passed through great distress both of body and mind; and whether greater is to be my portion, Heaven only knows. You may remember Isaac was unwell when you went from home. His disorder increased until a violent dysentery was the consequence of his complaints. There was no resting-place in the house for his terrible groans. He continued in this state nearly a week, when his disorder abated, and we have now hopes of his recovery. Two days after he was sick, I was seized in a violent manner. Had I known you were at Watertown, I should have sent Bracket for you. I suffered greatly between my inclination to have you return, and my fear of sending, lest you should be a partaker of the common calamity. After three days, an abatement of my disease relieved me from that anxiety. The next person in the same week was Susy; her we carried home, and hope she will not be very bad. Our little Tommy was the next, and he lies very ill now. Yesterday, Patty was seized. Our house is a hospital in every part, and what with my own weakness, and distress of mind for my family, I have been unhappy enough. And such is the distress of the neighborhood that I can scarcely find a well person to assist me in looking after the sick. So sickly and so mortal a time the oldest man does not remember."

Of the persons named, Isaac, Susy, and Patty, were servants. Tommy was the youngest son of Mr. Adams. The two elder had been sent out of the house. Only one of the household escaped the sickness. On the 16th she says: —

"Mrs. Randall has lost her daughter, Mrs. Brackett hers, Mr.

Thomas Thayer his wife. Two persons, belonging to Boston, have died this week in this parish. I know of eight this week who have been buried in this town.

"The dread upon the minds of people of catching the distemper is almost as great as if it was the smallpox. I have been distressed more than ever I was in my life to procure watchers and to get assistance. We have been four sabbaths without any meeting.

25 September.

"I sit down, with heavy heart, to write to you. I have had no other since you left me. Woe follows woe, and one affliction treads upon the heels of another. My distress in my own family having in some measure abated, it is excited anew upon that of my dear mother. Her kindness brought her to see me every day when I was ill, and our little Tommy. She has taken the disorder, and lies so bad that we have little hope of her recovery.

"The desolation of war is not so distressing as the havoc made by the pestilence. Some poor parents are mourning the loss of three, four, and five children, and some families are wholly stripped."

29 September.

"'Tis allotted me to go from the sick and almost dying bed of one of the best of parents, to my own habitation, where again I behold the same scene, only varied by a remoter connection. In past years small has been my portion of the bitter cup in comparison with many others. But there is now preparing for me, I fear, a large draught thereof. May I be enabled to submit, with patience and resignation, to the rod!"

These are not uncommon distresses, where there is war. There have been countries in which they have prevailed with far greater severity, attended by atrocities of which the mind cannot think without shuddering, for a term of a whole generation of the race. But, in Massachusetts, the dwellers on the seaboard had known nothing of the kind, until this conflict sprung up with the authority that should have protected, but now persecuted them. Mrs. Adams had been particularly exempted from any such sorrows. They came upon her, in her lonely state, with the greater force. On the 1st of October,

her mother died. The week after, the female, Patty, who had lingered a month in extreme agony, breathed her last. She made the fourth corpse that was committed to the ground on the 9th of October, in a community of perhaps eight hundred souls. Neither was dysentery the only form of disease prevailing. Fevers were raging among the men away in camp, and throat distemper was attacking the children.

Truly did Mr. Adams observe, in reply: "Fire, sword, pestilence, famine, often keep company, and visit a country in a flock." He yearned to return, but no moment could have been more unpropitious to such a step. He was a marked man; and a retreat from his post would have been construed as shrinking from the consequences of the exposure of his designs. He was not a person either to qualify or retract language which he held to be true. Besides, it was most important that he should just now show himself the declared advocate of the policy, the private exposition of which had been so abruptly laid before the world. The ideas were only six or eight months in advance of the general sentiment. He saw the necessity of pressing them steadily, and therefore felt bound, if possible, to remain.

There are periods of transition of opinion when the bold utterance of one voice precipitates the expression of the conclusions of many. The lapse of a month now brought with it a good deal of change in America, especially in the middle colonies. The occasion upon which this was decidedly, though privately, manifested to Mr. Adams, remained indelibly stamped upon his memory to his last days. He has recorded it in his "Diary," but without an allusion to the conversation that took place. It was on the 28th of September, when the congress and the assembly of Pennsylvania, at the invitation of the Committee of Safety of that colony, went on an excursion upon the Delaware, in the new galleys which had just been finished. In a private letter, addressed many years afterwards to Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of the party with him on that day, on board of The Bulldog, he called to mind the secret encouragement he received from that company, and the exhortations to persevere. Perhaps he stood in no need of this to do his duty; but the sternest will can find strength in executing its purposes from the praises of the feeblest. The heart of a man has quite as

much to do with his perseverance as his head, and that is always touched by the cheering response of his fellow-man.

Not many days elapsed before an opportunity occurred for pressing upon congress one of his favorite measures. On the 3d of October, the delegates of Rhode Island had presented the resolutions of their General Assembly, instructing them to use their influence to procure the establishment of a fleet at the expense of the continent. This naked proposition was at once met with a storm of ridicule, in which Samuel Chase, Dr. Zubly, of Georgia, J. Rutledge, and even one of the Massachusetts delegates, took an active part. With difficulty, its friends procured the consideration of the question to be left open a little while. Two days afterwards it came up in a softened shape, and then it met with more favor. So much is there in legislative bodies in the way of presenting an idea. News had been received from London that two vessels, laden with arms and gunpowder, had sailed for Canada. As these were articles of the first necessity to the cause, a motion for the appointment of a committee of three to prepare a plan to intercept them was well received, and forthwith adopted.

Of this committee the members were all from New England, Mr. Adams being one. They reported, in part, the same day, a recommendation that Massachusetts should be applied to for two armed vessels, that Rhode Island and Connecticut should be requested to add others, and that all these, if obtained, should be placed at the disposal of General Washington, who should fit them out at the continental expense to cruise for, and, if possible, to capture the expected ships. The resolutions, embodying these suggestions, were passed at once. The next day, the committee made a further report, directing the fitting out of two swift sailing vessels for a cruise of three months, and recommending the appointment of a committee of three to prepare estimates and make contracts. This second committee was accordingly appointed. It consisted of Mr. Deane, Mr. Langdon, and Mr. Gadsden. It reported in four days an estimate, which proved unsatisfactory, and was recommitted. The committee reported once more on the 30th, when congress enlarged its powers so far as to authorize the construction of four vessels instead of two, whilst they increased the number of its members to seven, of whom Mr. Adams was the seventh. The committee,

thus strengthened, extended their labors not merely to the construction of more ships, but also to the preparation of a system for the regulation of marine captures, as well as of the naval force of the Union. This code was reported on the 23d, and adopted partly on the 25th of November, and wholly on the 28th. It was drawn up by Mr. Adams. It was, in effect, the triumph of the policy which had been almost scouted out of the House, when first presented under the Rhode Island instructions.

In the mean time, Governor Ward, of Rhode Island, wrote home that he had great hopes to carry out the project of an American fleet, because "Dr. Franklin, Colonel Lee, the two Adamses, and many others would support it."[1] Neither was he mistaken. For, on the 11th of December, congress, having been well prepared by the debates on the former proposition, came to a determination to appoint a large committee to devise ways and means for furnishing the colonies with a naval armament. Thus was established the policy of naval defence, a policy of the utmost consequence to the commercial prosperity of any nation. Before this last vote, Mr. Adams had been called home, and he had no special charge of the system afterwards; but to the day of his death, through all the vicissitudes of his career, as well when the navy was made a reproach to him, as when it had won its way, through the war of 1812, to the highest popularity, he never changed his convictions of its fundamental importance in the system of an American statesman.

Another step was taken, at this time, which likewise had its origin in New England. The delegates from New Hampshire presented the instructions from their colony to obtain advice from congress, touching a method of administering justice and the regulation of their civil police. Mr. Adams seized the opportunity thus presented to urge upon congress the duty of recommending to the States that they should at once proceed to institute governments for themselves. The subject was referred, on the 26th of October, to a committee, consisting of Mr. J. Rutledge, Mr. J. Adams, Mr. Ward, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Sherman. These names, of themselves, show how much a little month had done to alter the temper of the majority. The committee reported, on the 2d of November, a recommendation

[1] Gammel's *Life of S. Ward*, in Sparks's *American Biography*, vol. xix. p. 316.

to New Hampshire "to call a full and free representation of the people; and that the representatives, *if they think it necessary*, establish such a form of government as in their judgment will best produce the happiness of the people, *during the continuance of the present dispute*." These qualifications certainly did not indicate any lack of caution in giving the advice, but yet the advice itself showed the progress the continent was making towards independence. Before this time, nothing approaching to it would have escaped earnest opposition, and probably defeat. Its adoption now was due to the circumstance, that, thirty-six hours before, two ships had got in, bringing the news from England of the king's supercilious refusal to hold out his hand to receive Dickinson's darling olive branch, and of his fulmination against the "open and avowed *rebellion*" in the colonies. It was plain that the bridge was broken behind the wavering. Nothing remained but to advance. Thus it was that a change came over the spirit of the assembly. Governor Ward hurried off the joyful tidings to Rhode Island at once.

"Our counsels," he said, "have been hitherto too fluctuating; one day, measures for carrying on the war were adopted; the next, nothing must be done that would widen the unhappy breach between Great Britain and the colonies. As these different ideas have prevailed, our conduct has been directed accordingly. . . . Thank God, the happy day, which I have long wished for, is at length arrived; the southern colonies no longer entertain jealousies of the northern; they no longer look back to Great Britain; they are convinced that they have been pursuing a phantom, and that their only safety is a vigorous, determined defence. One of the gentlemen, who has been most sanguine for pacific measures, and very jealous of the New England colonies, addressing me in the style of *Brother Rebel*, told me he was now ready to join us heartily. 'We have got,' says he, 'a sufficient answer to our petition. I want nothing more; but am ready to declare ourselves independent, send ambassadors,' &c., and much more, which prudence forbids me to commit to paper. Our resolutions will henceforth be spirited, clear, and decisive. May the Supreme Governor of the universe direct and prosper them!"

In his "Autobiography," Mr. Adams has given, from recollection, the substance of the reasoning which he was at this time

habitually using in justification of the views precipitated before the public in the intercepted letters. It is not necessary to repeat it here. Enough that it was unceasingly pressed, and that it gradually worked its way to favor. The journals of congress, imperfectly as they were kept by the secretary, upon the mistaken theory of recording only the motions adopted, nevertheless give some traces of the growth of his influence, in the more frequent occurrence of his name upon committees. His energy and clearness of mind were found as valuable in maturing the details of measures to be laid before the body, as his readiness and power in debate were effective in its deliberations. His own mind being completely made up, his action partook of the firmness and unity that always follow such a state. He expressed himself fully on this point, in a letter to his wife of the 7th of October.

"The situation of things is so alarming, that it is our duty to prepare our minds and hearts for every event, even the worst. From my earliest entrance into life, I have been engaged in the public cause of America; and, from first to last, I have had upon my mind a strong impression that things would be wrought up to their present crisis. I saw, from the beginning, that the controversy was of such a nature that it never would be settled, and every day convinces me more and more. This has been the source of all the disquietude of my life. It has lain down and risen up with me these twelve years. The thought, that we might be driven to the sad necessity of breaking our connection with Great Britain, exclusive of the carnage and destruction which, it was easy to see, must attend the separation, always gave me a great deal of grief. And even now, I would cheerfully retire from public life forever, renounce all chance for profits or honors from the public, nay, I would cheerfully contribute my little property, to obtain peace and liberty. But all these must go, and my life, too, before I can surrender the right of my country to a free constitution. I dare not consent to it. I should be the most miserable of mortals ever after, whatever honors or emoluments might surround me."

Towards the close of the year, finding that congress was likely to sit indefinitely, Mr. Adams decided to return home. Besides the personal considerations growing out of the state of his own family, and his exhaustion from constant service,

he was moved to this by the necessity of consulting the views of the leading men in the provincial convention in regard to his assumption of the new duties which they had decided to impose upon him. The people had now been more than two years without any administration of justice, and some degree of uneasiness was felt lest the loose habits which necessarily followed this relaxation of the laws should in time become inveterate. Sensible of the insufficient foundation of their authority, the council, in undertaking the reëstablishment of the superior court, had a special reference in the selection of persons to fill the seats of judges, to such as would, from the confidence had in their personal character and learning, predispose the great body of the people to acquiesce. With this view, they raised Mr. Adams over the heads of several of his seniors, both at bench and bar, to the place of chief justice. On his part, after great hesitation, he made up his mind to accept the post. But conscious, at the same time, of the pressure of a divided duty, he felt reluctant to retire from congress before he had established the doctrines to which he was now irrevocably pledged. It is very clear that the tone of Massachusetts, even then, depended upon his kinsman and himself, though but a minority of the delegation. It was for this reason that, in his letter of acceptance, he fixed the close of the session as the time when he should be prepared to assume the office. He wrote thus: —

"As I have ever considered the confidence of the public the more honorable in proportion to the perplexity and danger of the times, so I cannot but esteem this distinguished mark of the approbation of the Honorable Board as a greater obligation than if it had been bestowed at a season of greater ease and security. Whatever discouraging circumstances, therefore, may attend me, in point of health, of fortune, or experience, I dare not refuse to undertake this duty.

"Be pleased, then, to acquaint the Honorable Board, that, as soon as the circumstances of the colonies will admit an adjournment of the congress, I shall return to the Honorable Board, and undertake, to the utmost of my ability, to discharge the momentous duties to which they have seen fit to appoint me."

Finding that this adjournment would not take place very soon, and imagining that he might better understand the views

of the council by personal conference, he determined to return. There were those in congress who scarcely knew whether to call this decision a deliverance or not. A curious proof of it is found in a letter of Mr. Lynch, of South Carolina, to General Washington, written on the day he left Philadelphia. "One of our members sets out to-day for New England," he says. "Whether his intents be wicked or not, I doubt much. *He should be watched.*" The person thus suspected had been regularly chosen as a member of the council, so that he took his seat in that board very shortly after he got home. A brief consultation was sufficient to explain what was really wanted of him. His colleagues, though indisposed to draw him from the scene of his present labors, of which they appreciated the importance, wished to fortify their new judicial tribunal with the weight of his personal and professional reputation. Difficult as it seemed to reconcile these two forms of service, they ultimately hit upon this expedient to do it. It was agreed that the court should go on, for a time, without his presence. If no difficulties should occur in the establishment of its authority, then he was to continue his labors in congress so long as he might deem them important to the establishment of the great objects Massachusetts had at heart. To these conditions he seems to have assented. But it being considered essential to prepare for the introduction of the court by some preliminary appeal to the conservative principles of the people, he was charged with the duty of drawing up a paper to be issued by the authorities. The original draft of this paper, in Mr. Adams's handwriting, remains in the archives of Massachusetts. It seems to have been designed as a comprehensive review of the causes which led to the existing state of things, and an earnest appeal to all classes to unite their exertions to maintain it. It was formally adopted by the Council and the House of Representatives, who ordered it to be read at the opening of every court of judicature, superior and inferior, as well as at the annual town meeting in every town. They likewise recommended to the several ministers of the gospel, throughout the colony, to read it to their congregations immediately after divine service on the sabbath following their receipt of it.

Such being the importance attached to this proclamation, at the time, and not without cause, it is no more than proper that it should find its place here.

BY THE GREAT AND GENERAL COURT OF THE COLONY OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY.

A PROCLAMATION.

The frailty of human nature, the wants of individuals, and the numerous dangers which surround them through the course of life, have in all ages, and in every country, impelled them to form societies and establish governments.

As the happiness of the people is the sole end of government, so the consent of the people is the only foundation of it, in reason, morality, and the natural fitness of things. And, therefore, every act of government, every exercise of sovereignty, against or without the consent of the people, is injustice, usurpation, and tyranny.

It is a maxim, that in every government there must exist somewhere a supreme, sovereign, absolute, and uncontrollable power; but this power resides always in the body of the people; and it never was, or can be, delegated to one man or a few; the great creator having never given to men a right to vest others with authority over them unlimited either in duration or degree.

When kings, ministers, governors, or legislators, therefore, instead of exercising the powers intrusted with them according to the principles, forms, and proportions stated by the constitution, and established by the original compact, prostitute those powers to the purposes of oppression; to subvert, instead of supporting a free constitution; to destroy, instead of preserving the lives, liberties, and properties of the people; they are no longer to be deemed magistrates vested with a sacred character, but become public enemies, and ought to be resisted.

The administration of Great Britain, despising equally the justice, humanity, and magnanimity of their ancestors, and the rights, liberties, and courage of Americans, have, for a course of years, labored to establish a sovereignty in America, not founded in the consent of the people, but in the mere will of persons a thousand leagues from us, whom we know not, and have endeavored to establish this sovereignty over us, against our consent, in all cases whatsoever.

The colonies, during this period, have recurred to every peaceable resource in a free constitution, by petitions and remonstrances, to obtain justice; which has been not only denied to

them, but they have been treated with unexampled indignity and contempt; and, at length, open war of the most atrocious, cruel, and sanguinary kind, has been commenced against them. To this, an open, manly, and successful resistance has hitherto been made. Thirteen colonies are now firmly united in the conduct of this most just and necessary war, under the wise counsels of their congress.

It is the will of Providence, for wise, righteous, and gracious ends, that this colony should have been singled out, by the enemies of America, as the first object both of their envy and their revenge; and after having been made the subject of several merciless and vindictive statutes, one of which was intended to subvert our constitution by charter, is made the seat of war.

No effectual resistance to the system of tyranny prepared for us could be made without either instant recourse to arms, or a temporary suspension of the ordinary powers of government and tribunals of justice; to the last of which evils, in hopes of a speedy reconciliation with Great Britain upon equitable terms, the congress advised us to submit. And mankind has seen a phenomenon without example in the political world, a large and populous colony subsisting in great decency and order for more than a year under such a suspension of government.

But, as our enemies have proceeded to such barbarous extremities, commencing hostilities upon the good people of this colony, and, with unprecedented malice, exerting their power to spread the calamities of fire, sword, and famine through the land, and no reasonable prospect remains of a speedy reconciliation with Great Britain, the congress have resolved: —

"That no obedience being due to the act of parliament for altering the charter of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, nor to a governor or lieutenant-governor, who will not observe the directions of, but endeavor to subvert that charter, the governor and lieutenant-governor of that colony are to be considered as absent, and their offices vacant. And as there is no council there, and inconveniences arising from the suspension of the powers of government are intolerable, especially at a time when General Gage hath actually levied war, and is carrying on hostilities against his majesty's peaceable and loyal subjects of that colony; that, in order to conform as near as may be to the

spirit and substance of the charter, it be recommended to the provincial convention to write letters to the inhabitants of the several places which are entitled to representation in assembly, requesting them to choose such representatives; and that the assembly, when chosen, do elect counsellors; and that such assembly and council exercise the powers of government, until a governor of his majesty's appointment will consent to govern the colony according to its charter."

In pursuance of which advice, the good people of this colony have chosen a full and free representation of themselves, who, being convened in assembly, have elected a council; who, as the executive branch of government, have constituted necessary officers through the colony. The present generation, therefore, may be congratulated on the acquisition of a form of government more immediately in all its branches under the influence and control of the people, and therefore, more free and happy than was enjoyed by their ancestors. But as a government so popular can be supported only by universal knowledge and virtue, in the body of the people, it is the duty of all ranks to promote the means of education for the rising generation, as well as true religion, purity of manners, and integrity of life among all orders and degrees.

As an army has become necessary for our defence, and in all free States the civil must provide for and control the military power, the major part of the council have appointed magistrates and courts of justice in every county, whose happiness is so connected with that of the people, that it is difficult to suppose they can abuse their trust. The business of it is to see those laws enforced, which are necessary for the preservation of peace, virtue, and good order. And the Great and General Court expects and requires that all necessary support and assistance be given, and all proper obedience yielded to them; and will deem every person, who shall fail of his duty in this respect towards them, a disturber of the peace of this colony, and deserving of exemplary punishment.

That piety and virtue, which alone can secure the freedom of any people, may be encouraged, and vice and immorality suppressed, the Great and General Court have thought fit to issue this proclamation, commanding and enjoining it upon the good people of this colony, that they lead sober, religious, and peace-

able lives, avoiding all blasphemies, contempt of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Lord's Day, and all other crimes and misdemeanors, all debauchery, profaneness, corruption, venality, all riotous and tumultuous proceedings, and all immoralities whatsoever; and that they decently and reverently attend the public worship of God, at all times acknowledging with gratitude his merciful interposition in their behalf, devoutly confiding in him, as the God of armies, by whose favor and protection alone they may hope for success in their present conflict.

And all judges, justices, sheriffs, grand-jurors, tything-men, and all other civil officers within this colony, are hereby strictly enjoined and commanded that they contribute all in their power, by their advice, exertions, and examples, towards a general reformation of manners, and that they bring to condign punishment every person who shall commit any of the crimes or misdemeanors aforesaid, or that shall be guilty of any immoralities whatsoever; and that they use their utmost endeavors to have the resolves of the congress and the good and wholesome laws of this colony duly carried into execution.

And as the ministers of the gospel, within this colony, have, during the late relaxation of the powers of civil government, exerted themselves for our safety, it is hereby recommended to them still to continue their virtuous labors for the good of the people, inculcating, by their public ministry and private example, the necessity of religion, morality, and good order.

The records of the council, during this visit, show Mr. Adams otherwise consulted, as well as actively employed in different committees to regulate the civil and military concerns of the colony. He was likewise called upon more than once for his advice by the commander-in-chief. A marked instance was in the case of General Lee, who had solicited authority to raise volunteers in Connecticut for the purpose of relieving New York city from the pressure of Tory combinations. Washington, with his habitual prudence, applied himself carefully to consider the extent of his own powers, before he should give a favorable answer. Mr. Adams had been a member of the committee which had framed his commission and instructions. To him, therefore, he naturally turned for information to guide him. The answer which he received was prompt and decisive,

and Lee was forthwith dispatched. Again, Mr. Adams was summoned to sit as a member of the council of war, held at head-quarters on the 16th of January, to determine on the proper measures to forward the expedition to Canada, and to hasten the operations before Boston. Meanwhile, the Provincial Convention, by reëlecting him, with great unanimity, to serve as a delegate to the Federal Congress to the end of the year, 1776, signified their approbation of the plan to postpone his assumption of the judicial robes. It was in obedience to this last direction, that he, a fourth time, turned his horse's head towards Philadelphia. He did it now in company with a colleague newly elected, Elbridge Gerry, destined to prove a faithful and energetic coadjutor during the remainder of the struggle, and a sincere friend so long as he lived.

Previous to departure, however, he felt it proper to pay a visit to head-quarters, an account of which he gave to his wife, as follows: —

"I am determined not to commit a fault, which escaped me the last time I set out for the southward. I waited on General Thomas, at Roxbury, this morning, and then went to Cambridge, where I dined at Colonel Mifflin's, with the General and lady, and a vast collection of other company, among whom were six or seven sachems and warriors of the French Caghnawaga Indians, with some of their wives and children. A savage feast they made of it, yet were very polite in the Indian style. One of these sachems is an Englishman, a native of this colony, whose name was Williams, captivated in infancy, with his mother, and adopted by some kind squaw. Another, I think, is half French blood.

"I was introduced to them by the General, as one of the grand council fire at Philadelphia, which made them prick up their ears. They came and shook hands with me, and made me low bows and scrapes, &c. In short, I was much pleased with this day's entertainment. The General is to make them presents in clothes and trinkets. They have visited the lines at Cambridge, and are going to see those at Roxbury.

"To-morrow we mount for the grand council fire, where I shall think often of my little brood at the foot of Penn's hill."

The travellers reached their destination early in February. On the 9th of that month Mr. Gerry, in presenting their creden-

tials, also furnished the new instructions under which they were to act. They show another step in the march of events.

"Whereas John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, and Elbridge Gerry, esquires, have been chosen, by joint ballot of the two houses of Assembly, to represent the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in New England, in the American Congress, until the first day of January, A. D. 1777;

"Resolved, that they, or any one or more of them, are hereby fully empowered, with the delegates from the other American colonies, to concert, direct, and order such further measures as shall to them appear best calculated for the establishment of right and liberty to the American colonies upon a basis permanent and secure, against the power and art of the British administration, and guarded against any future encroachments of their enemies; with power to adjourn to such times and places, as shall appear most conducive to the public safety and advantage."

Yet, though thus armed by the advancing sentiment of their own colony with this significant authority, to "establish liberty upon a permanent basis in America," they were not so happy as to find corresponding progress making among the other members. The Middle States, utterly disappointed by the failure of all the applications to Great Britain, and foreseeing the tendency to a complete breach, had fallen into a state of despondency very unfavorable to energetic measures. Added to this, a British emissary, Lord Drummond, affecting to have more authority than he probably possessed, had been laboring, not without some success, to paralyze exertion. Mr. Adams describes this state of things in a letter to his wife, of the 11th of February, among the most remarkable of his productions. The "critical event late in the spring" did not fail to happen.

"There is a deep anxiety, a kind of thoughtful melancholy, and, in some, a lowness of spirits approaching to despondency, prevailing through the southern colonies, at present, very similar to what I have often observed in Boston, particularly on the first news of the port bill, and last year about this time, or a little later, when the bad news arrived which dashed their fond hopes, with which they had deluded themselves through the

winter. In this, or a similar condition, we shall remain, I think, until late in the spring, when some critical event will take place, perhaps sooner. But the arbiter of events, the sovereign of the world, only knows which way the torrent will be turned. Judging by experience, by probabilities, and by all appearances, I conclude it will roll on to dominion and glory, though the circumstances and consequences may be bloody.

"In such great changes and commotions, individuals are but atoms. It is scarcely worth while to consider what the consequences will be to us. What will be the effects upon present and future millions, and millions of millions, is a question very interesting to benevolence, natural and Christian. God grant they may, and I firmly believe they will be happy."

A more particular attempt to define the nature of Mr. Adams's labors in this, the most important crisis of his life, must now be made. Some light is shed upon them by the letter of Governor Ward, already referred to, dated the 3d of November, about three weeks before the appointment of the secret committee of foreign affairs. In it the writer, rejoicing that the jealousy entertained of the New England colonies was yielding to the pressure of the news from Great Britain, quotes, as a proof of it, a remark made in private to himself by one of the most pacific of the members, that he was at last ready to declare independence, send ambassadors, &c. It thus appears that the two points, which had labored the most in the deliberations previous to this time, were *independence*, and *foreign alliances*. That Mr. Adams had been prominent in urging both, there can be no doubt. But no clear traces are found of the manner in which the discussions were introduced or carried on. From his own letters it incidentally appears, that of the two points, he exerted himself much the most strenuously upon the second, and with the most effect upon his hearers. There is reason to suppose that a motion was concerted between him and Samuel Chase, of Maryland, which was designed to authorize the dispatch of ambassadors to France, clothed with certain conditional instructions, the precise character of which is not mentioned. This motion was actually made by Mr. Chase, and it was seconded by Mr. Adams. The exact date of it cannot be traced. In a letter of the latter to the former, written some months later, he alludes to it only as having been made

"last fall," and afterwards "murdered."[1] The probability is that it was introduced soon after his return late in September, and was discussed at intervals through the following month. Some account of the debate is given by Mr. Adams, in a letter of much posterior date, which is valuable as showing the precise attitude he took on this important part of the national policy, and the extent to which he helped to give it the shape it finally assumed. This later evidence, as well as that of his "Autobiography," so far as it bears on his own opinions, is corroborated by the spirit of his letters written at the time. It is found in a letter to Dr. Rush, dated the 30th of September, 1805, and the material part is that which follows: —

"The truth is, that in consequence of many conversations and consultations between Mr. Chase and me, he made a motion in congress in the fall of this year, 1775, for sending ambassadors to France. I seconded the motion. You know the state of the nerves of congress at that time. Although you was not then a member, you had opportunities enough to have felt the pulse of that body. Whether the effect of the motion resembled the shock of electricity, of mesmerism, or of galvanism, the most exactly, I leave you philosophers to determine; but the grimaces, the agitations and convulsions were very great. Knowing the composition of congress, you will be at no loss to conjecture the parts taken in the debate which ensued, which was very vehement.

"It was a measure which I had long contemplated, and, as I then thought, and have confidently believed from that time to this, well digested.

"The principle of foreign affairs, which I then advocated, has been the invariable guide of my conduct in all situations, as ambassador in France, Holland, and England, and as Vice-President and President of the United States, from that hour to this. . . . . This principle was, that we should make no treaties of alliance with any European power; that we should consent to none but treaties of commerce; that we should separate ourselves, as far as possible and as long as possible, from all European politics and wars. In discussing the variety of motions which were made as substitutes for Mr. Chase's, I

[1] See the letter, vol. ix. p. 420.

was remarkably cool, and, for me, unusually eloquent. On no occasion, before or after, did I ever make a greater impression on congress.

"Cæsar Rodney told me I had opened an entire new field to his view, and removed all his difficulties concerning foreign connections.

"Mr. Duane said to me: 'We all give you great credit for that speech; and we all agree that you have more fully considered and better digested the subject of foreign connections than any man we have heard speak on the subject.'

"Although Mr. Dickinson was then offended with me, on account of an intercepted letter, and never spoke to me personally, yet I was told that he was highly pleased with my sentiments on foreign affairs.

. . . . . .

"After all our argumentation, however, we could not carry our motion; but, after twenty subtle projects to get rid of it, the whole terminated in a committee of secret correspondence."

The object of securing the assistance of France had been in the minds of other members besides Mr. Adams; and some of the patriots, stimulated by the fear that Great Britain would be beforehand with them, had been disposed to appeal at once to the cupidity of that country, by large offers of territory and power in America. Of this number was Patrick Henry.[1] The policy of Mr. Adams seems to have been different, and limited exclusively to presenting the inducements of commercial advantage, and the profits attending a practical monopoly of the American trade. He does not appear even to have contemplated asking for direct aid, or embarking in a political alliance in any event.[2] His confidence in the ability of America to sustain herself was too great to permit him to consent to any sacrifices, to enlist services that might possibly prove to have been purchased at too dear a rate. He deemed it the wiser course to rely upon other reasoning to obtain his objects, the nature of which it is not difficult to conceive. He had studied history too closely not to have mastered the relations between

[1] See his letter to J. A., vol. iv. p. 201. Likewise Charles Lee's letter, replying to his arguments. Sparks's *American Biography*, vol. xviii. p. 119.

[2] Vol. ix. p. 409.

Great Britain and France for the five preceding centuries. Through all that period, but one judgment could be formed of the causes, which had, almost without an interval, kept those nations alienated from each other. Neither did the fear and the jealousy of each other's ambition, which had so often broken out in open war, appear to have become in the least softened by the passage of time. On the contrary, it had never been more apparent than at the very last treaty of peace, when the pride of the French had received its severest humiliation. Instead of the dreams of universal empire, so fondly indulged during the brilliant days of the great Louis, they had been forced, by the triumphs of their rivals, not merely to submit to the sacrifice of that American empire they had labored for years to establish, but even to put up with what was harder to bear, the dictatorial temper of the most haughty of British statesmen. Well aware of the nature of this mortification, Mr. Adams saw at once how tempting to France was the opportunity now offered by the condition of the colonies for severe retaliation. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the speeches, which he describes as the most eloquent he ever made, were filled with the speculations which the occasion suggested, and in which his mind had, from his youth, delighted.

Their nature had, indeed, somewhat changed. It was no longer the "turbulent Gallics," who were in the way of the establishment of the empire he had foreshadowed in his early visions. They had ceased to be formidable, and in their place had come a danger of subjection from the very power in whose interests he was then ardently enlisted. It was the aid of those very Gallics which he was now earnest to invoke against the master, whose obstinacy had led him to play the tyrant. That the assembly he addressed should have listened with attention to his elucidations of these points, is not at all wonderful. To most of the members they must have been novel as well as striking. Doubtless they had their effect in advancing opinion, though not at the pace the speaker desired. There was a lion in the way. All the wavering instinctively felt, that to take this step would be, in the eyes of Britain, the one great sin, for which no subsequent contrition could atone. Not even independence itself would be so bitter an injury as an alliance with her natural enemy. It followed that Mr. Adams made few

converts, and the motion failed. Something less militant found more favor. A half-way house seemed better to stop at than taking the journey at once. So a secret committee was established, whose business it should be "to correspond with friends in Great Britain, Ireland, *and other parts of the world.*" Like a lady's letter, the important part of this was in the postscript. To people outside it was intentionally left a little equivocal, but the initiated knew that it pointed to France. Yet so fearful were the majority of being precipitated into a gait more rapid than they liked, that they took care not to put on their new committee any of the impetuous men. With the single exception of Dr. Franklin, whose European reputation and connections pointed him out, beyond all controversy, as a suitable member, all the rest were selected from the most cautious and conservative class. The members from New England were wholly excluded, and most emphatically that one who had been the champion of the policy to which it pointed, John Adams.

In free governments, it seldom happens that a person of the boldest and most comprehensive mind will serve the purposes of a political leader for ordinary times. His conclusions are apt to be too far in advance of the ratiocination of those who are expected to follow, to keep the chain of influence perfectly tight. Burke's character of Charles Townshend happily describes the qualities necessary to attain the highest degree of power over deliberative assemblies, yet the possession of them all may not the less consist, as they did in his case, with a gross deficiency in the higher elements of statesmanship. When no emergency exists, most men will naturally give their ear to him who shall succeed in pleasing them best. It is only the occurrence of some unusual crisis which changes the exigency, and draws attention away from him who knows only how to flatter, to him who is best able to direct. There has been a period in the history of this country when the sarcastic elocution of John Randolph reigned preëminent over the deliberations of the federal representatives; but what mark has Randolph left in his career, that will entitle him to occupy a place among American statesmen? Such a part as his, Mr. Adams could not have played with success at any time of his life. His mind was always overleaping the intermediate pro-

cesses which absorb so much of the attention of the greater number, in order to revel in the vision of results they are not beginning even to dream of as possible. This peculiarity, visible in him at the age of twenty, may be traced through the dissertation upon the canon and feudal law, into the letters to his wife, and down to the speculations upon the marvellous vicissitudes of Europe, of his later years. It made him for some time, in congress, a teacher with few scholars. Nor is it likely that he would ever have been otherwise, had it not been for the rapid march of events which not only verified the wisdom of his words, but called forth an absolute necessity of relying upon some energy, like his, for guidance in the difficulties besetting the path. Not a single individual of the first congress had, in point of clear vision of the future, placed himself on the level of Joseph Hawley or of either Adams. And even now that the lapse of eighteen months had brought them to see somewhat more nearly alike, there was yet a striking difference in their relative capacity to estimate the magnitude of what was to come. Few yet understood that they were busy in laying the foundations of a great empire. They were too much occupied with present embarrassments, and in devising some scheme whereby to get back to where they formerly stood, to be anxious to meddle with futurity.

In the midst of this state of feeling appeared the celebrated production, called "Common Sense," which, singularly falling in with the temper of the moment, attained a degree of popularity, and exerted a force, that, from a calm review of its substance, at the present day, it is difficult fully to comprehend. This pamphlet was issued at Philadelphia whilst Mr. Adams was absent at home. Some of the members, who had heard him in congress dilate in something of the same strain, were at first disposed to fix the authorship upon him. But however agreeable to him the imputation of writing such nervous English, he was by no means disposed to share the responsibility of many opinions which it expressed. With his customary penetration, he at once set down the writer as much more competent to destroy than to build up; a judgment fully confirmed in after times. His own mind, on the other hand, having already reached the limit to which he considered the first of the processes useful, was now absorbed in the reflections

necessary to execute the second. The substance of this is expressed in the following extract of a letter to his wife, dated the 19th of March, 1776: —

"You ask what is thought of 'Common Sense.' Sensible men think there are some whims, some sophisms, some artful addresses to superstitious notions, some keen attempts upon the passions, in this pamphlet. But all agree there is a great deal of good sense delivered in clear, simple, concise, and nervous style. His sentiments of the abilities of America, and of the difficulty of a reconciliation with Great Britain, are generally approved. But his notions and plans of continental government are not much applauded. Indeed, this writer has a better hand in pulling down than building. It has been very generally propagated through the continent that I wrote this pamphlet. But although I could not have written any thing in so manly and striking a style, I flatter myself I should have made a more respectable figure as an architect, if I had undertaken such a work. This writer seems to have very inadequate ideas of what is proper and necessary to be done, in order to form constitutions for single colonies, as well as a great model of union for the whole."

Of all the colonies, those of the south stood most in need of revising their existing institutions, in order to adapt them to the novel state of things occasioned by the Revolution. They had been founded upon the recognition of an exclusive principle, which, though much modified in its operation by the equalizing tendencies at work in all communities of short date, could not fail steadily to extend its sway with the increase of property and the growth of local and family associations. Virginia, especially, under the legislation which had hitherto prevailed, had been raising into permanency a strong landed aristocracy. Already there existed entails of enormous tracts in the hands of single families, the steady operation of which, in every case, could only be barred by some special interference of the legislature. And, superinduced upon this, a species of villenage was just growing into form, through the subjection, by means of the commercial greediness of Britain, of natives of Africa as serfs to the soil. Thus, to use the words of one of her own historians, "an aristocracy neither of talent, nor learning, nor moral worth, but of landed and slave interest, was fos-

tered."[1] From the special class thus nursed into distinction were drawn the members of the executive council, the judicial officers down to those of the county courts, and even the representatives to the popular branch of the legislature. Under the natural tendency of habits of authority to confirm power, this system became so strong, that portions of it resisted all the influence which Mr. Jefferson exercised in his lifetime, and are by no means annihilated to this day. The course of events at Philadelphia had roused many leading men of that colony to the observation of the obstacles interposed by it to the establishment of popular institutions. Among the number, the most earnest and anxious were Patrick Henry, the Lees, George Wythe, and others of the most decided advocates of independence. They felt the necessity of commencing a reform by going at once to the root of the government itself. Here they were naturally brought into consultation with the delegates from New England, already long familiarized with the working of the most republican system then known in the world. To John Adams, who united to much study of the theory of government at large a thorough acquaintance with the particular forms of his own colony, they frequently recurred for advice. He was not unaware of the nature of the embarrassments in which they were involved, nor without anxiety as to their effect in delaying the general results which he had most at heart. The delegates from Virginia had never been entirely united in their policy, one portion of them always holding back against energetic measures, so that he felt the necessity of doing something to establish the preponderance of the other. A remarkable letter of his, called forth in part by the acts to restrain the trade of the colonies, addressed to General Gates, at this time resident in that colony, explains the matter very clearly.

23 March, 1776.

"I agree with you that, in politics, the middle way is none at all. If we finally fail in this great and glorious contest, it will be by bewildering ourselves in groping after this middle way. We have hitherto conducted half a war; acted upon the line

[1] Howison's *History of Virginia*, vol. ii. p. 201. This work is written with merit for which the author seems to have received scarcely any reward. Literature is a sickly plant where the sun burns so fiercely that labor is deputed.

of defence, &c., &c.; but you will see by to-morrow's paper that, for the future, we are likely to wage three quarters of a war. The continental ships of war, and provincial ships of war, and letters of marque, and privateers, are permitted to cruise on British property, wherever found on the ocean. This is not independency, you know. Nothing like it. If a post or two more should bring you unlimited latitude of trade to all nations, and a polite invitation to all nations to trade with you, take care that you do not call it or think it independency. No such matter. Independency is a hobgoblin of such frightful mien, that it would throw a delicate person into fits to look it in the face.

"I know not whether you have seen the act of parliament, called the restraining act, or piratical act, or plundering act, or act of independency, for by all these titles it is called. I think the most apposite is, the act of independency. For king, lords, and commons have united in sundering this country from that, I think, forever. It is a complete dismemberment of the British empire. It throws thirteen colonies out of the royal protection, levels all distinctions, and makes us independent in spite of our supplications and entreaties. It may be fortunate that the act of independency should come from the British parliament, rather than the American congress; but it is very odd that Americans should hesitate at accepting such a gift from them.

"However, my dear friend Gates, all our misfortunes arise from a single source, the reluctance of the southern colonies to republican government. The success of this war depends on a skilful steerage of the political vessel. The difficulty lies in forming particular constitutions for particular colonies, and a continental constitution for the whole. Each colony should establish its own government, and then a league should be formed between them all. This can be done only on popular principles and axioms, which are so abhorrent to the inclinations of the barons of the south, and the proprietary interests in the Middle States, as well as to that avarice of land which has made on this continent so many votaries to mammon, that I sometimes dread the consequences. However, patience, fortitude, and perseverance, with the help of time, will get us over these obstructions. Thirteen colonies, under such a form of government as Connecticut, or one not quite so popular, leagued

together in a faithful confederacy, might bid defiance against all the potentates of Europe, if united against them."

Impressed by the cogency of these views, as presented by Mr. Adams in frequent conversations at Philadelphia, Richard Henry Lee thought a more extended and beneficial use might be made of them if they could be reduced to writing in a definite plan, and circulated in Virginia prior to the assembling of the body to which it was proposed to intrust the reconstruction of their government. To his solicitation Mr. Adams had yielded, by addressing to him a short letter, comprising the main elements of the system which he most approved. This letter, dated the 15th of November, 1775, is found in another part of this work.[1] It was carried to Virginia by Mr. Lee, and circulated among his friends, in manuscript. Copies[2] were taken, some of which made their way into the hands of persons still attached to Great Britain, by whom they were sent across the Atlantic, and laid before ministers, as further evidence of the settled policy of the American rebels. But, finding this sketch too brief to convey his full meaning, Mr. Adams responded to other applications, by composing an essay, in the form of a letter to George Wythe, which was committed to the press, under the title of "Thoughts on Government, applicable to the Present State of the American Colonies. In a Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend."[3] This pamphlet was at once forwarded to Virginia, where the proposed convention was about to assemble. It was regarded by the aristocratic party as so dangerous, that an answer was immediately prepared in Philadelphia, and transmitted to Williamsburgh for publication in the Virginia Gazette, on the very day of the meeting. These two essays have not yet entirely lost their interest. They may be regarded as embodying classes of opinions, prevalent in the two leading colonies of North America, on the subject of government, before the Revolution. But the influence of Henry and the Lees, and Mason, and Wythe, and, most of all, of Thomas Jefferson, was decisive in bringing Virginia to renounce the system of an executive and senate for life, and a triennial

[1] Vol. iv. pp. 185–187.

[2] One instance is casually mentioned by Mr. Hogg, the agent of the Transylvania proprietors. Force's *American Archives*, 4th series. vol. iv. p. 543.

[3] Vol. iv. pp. 193–200.

representation, advocated in the publication at Williamsburgh, and to model her system more nearly in accordance with the republican tendencies of the communities established in the north.[1]

But it was not to Virginia alone that the speculations of Mr. Adams, at this time, proved useful. North Carolina, her neighbor, was likewise preparing for the transition to an independent State, by introducing the forms necessary to maintain it. The legislature, through the chairman of a committee appointed to project a constitution, Mr. Burke, made an application to him for his advice, which was given in an answer of much the same tenor with the published tract. This answer was not found until the year 1846, when, with the other papers of Governor Burke, it fell into the possession of the Historical Society of that State. It differs only in the language from the pamphlet. A third letter, of the same tenor, came to light in a volume published by John Taylor, of Caroline, in Virginia, in the year 1814. This had been obtained from John Penn, who represented North Carolina in the continental congress. It is not improbable that Mr. Adams wrote others of the same sort, of which he kept no copies, but which may, in course of time, likewise appear. In this way his sentiments were so extensively diffused as materially to guide the public mind in the construction of many of the State constitutions. The immediate effect was particularly visible in those adopted by New York and North Carolina, the last of which remained unchanged for sixty years, and at the time of its amendment, in 1836, was the only one left of the constitutions adopted at the Revolution; and the remoter influence has remained to these times.

It is very true that the outline of the system thus recommended contains the same features, in the main, which are found in the colonial charters of New England, and are in them taken from the constitutional forms of the mother country. Mr. Adams had made them the study of his life, and fully believed that they rested upon general principles of the highest possible value. He had little of the purely scheming temper that has led some of the noblest minds of the world to devise systems of their own, ingenious, and sometimes imposing, but utterly

[1] Patrick Henry's anxiety on this point may be judged by his letter published in this work, vol. iv. p. 202.

wanting in practical adaptation to the feelings and habits of those for whose use they were intended. He had studied Plato, and Montesquieu, Milton, Locke, and Harrington, quite as profitably to avoid their errors as to heed their counsels. Had it been otherwise, nothing could have been more easy than to have seized the finest opportunity ever yet presented for the introduction of new theories into the social system, to make experiments not less specious than any proposed by them, and quite as visionary. The people, though attached by habit to the old forms, were very open to receive new impressions. Their ideas upon government in general were not a little crude. Mr. Adams did not permit himself to be led astray by any of these temptations. Conservative by temperament and education, he applied his mind to the task of saving whatever experience had proved to be valuable in the British constitutional forms, and cutting off only those portions which were not adapted to the feelings, manners, habits, and principles of a young nation oppressed by no burdens transmitted from a ruder age, and deranged by no abuses, the offspring of barbarous force. The skill with which this was done may be best understood from the result. For it is undeniable that the success of the constitutions, adopted in the respective States, has proved proportionate to the degree of their approximation to the general features of his plan. In Pennsylvania, in which happened the greatest deviation, likewise happened the most serious disorders to the public peace; whilst in that, as well as in other States, a conviction of error led the people in no long time to copy more or less closely the common model. From that day to this, the public sentiment has remained so firmly settled in the United States, that in all the revisions, or creations called for by the rise of new communities, the incidental modifications that have been made, however much they may affect the essence, never change the form.

It is to be particularly noted, however, in speaking of the various letters written by Mr. Adams at this time, that they all agree in one thing, and that is, in viewing the States as nations wholly independent of each other, and needing no bond of union stronger than a single federal assembly of representatives fairly apportioned, with authority sacredly confined to cases of war, trade, disputes between the States, the post-office, and the com-

mon territories. This shows that the writer had not yet devoted so much thought to this branch of the subject as it required. At the present day, aided by the light of past experience, it appears palpable enough that, in order to make any assembly of the sort truly important and respected, it is necessary to clothe it with sufficient power to enforce its decrees, and that this, in its turn, involves the necessity of having at command some sources of revenue independent of the will of the constituent bodies. Inattention to this point was the cause of the failure of the experiment of confederation. As yet, Mr. Adams shared the general confidence in the disposition of the respective States to abide by all their engagements in one spirit, however onerous they might become. It was expecting too much regularity from human nature, which only succeeds in educing a tolerably fixed average result from a well-established variety of uncertainties. The failure of any one State had bad effects far beyond its own circle, for it furnished a plausible excuse for the others to do likewise. That republican jealousy which seeks to cut off all power from fear of abuses, sometimes does quite as much harm as if it created a despotism. For it inevitably brings round an unanswerable application of the proverb, to which arbitrary men, the world over, have appealed in justification of every stretch of their sway.

How well Mr. Adams comprehended this, at a later moment, will appear hereafter. It is sufficient now to say that his advice, in the early part of 1776, greatly aided so to shape the social system in the several States that they were able to bear with ease the development that has since been made of it. And, further, it is proper to note this as the date when, having gone as far as he felt it to be necessary in the labor of removing obstacles to independence, he began to direct his attention more closely to the consolidation of a new system, designed before long to be substituted for the old.

Not that the struggle for independence was yet over, however. Far from it. Parties had become pretty distinctly drawn in the congress; and although an impression was gaining, that they must come to it in the end, yet many members viewed with undiminished repugnance any act that might tend to bring it nearer. The notion, that commissioners would yet be sent from Great Britain, bearing up the olive branch which had once

been so haughtily trampled under foot, was held out openly by some, and cherished in secret by more. Among these, with various modifications of opinion during the struggle, are to be reckoned most of the delegates of the Middle States, about half of those from the south, and here and there a member from New England. On the opposite side were arrayed a majority of Massachusetts and Virginia, supported by New England and scattering members from other States, but, most of all, by the pressure of the army leaders, and of the popular sentiment condensed by the appeal of "Common Sense." In the first class may be numbered Harrison and Braxton, of Virginia; Lynch, Middleton, and Edward Rutledge, of South Carolina; Hooper, of North Carolina; Goldsborough and Johnson, of Maryland; Dickinson, Morris, Wilson, and Willing, of Pennsylvania; William Livingston, of New Jersey; Duane, R. R. Livingston, and Jay, of New York. Of the second class were Wythe, Jefferson, and the Lees, of Virginia; Gadsden and John Rutledge, of South Carolina; Chase, of Maryland; McKean and Rodney, of Delaware; Franklin, of Pennsylvania; Sergeant, of New Jersey, and almost all the New England delegates.

Among them, John Adams now began to take the station which his superior powers of debate, his intellectual vigor, his learning, and the earnestness of his will, naturally gave him. Not at all suited to be a chief, when much depends on a spirit of accommodation to the whims or the longings of individuals held together by fleeting considerations of personal or public interest, he was yet eminently qualified to stand forth the exponent of a clear, strong, and noble plan of action in a time of danger, to weld the determined into the wedge of his iron energy, to harden the wavering into the fixedness of his unfaltering purpose, and to shame the cowardly, at least so far as to deter them from disturbing their brethren with their fears. His speeches and exhortations, repeated on every fair opportunity throughout this period, were probably little like the brilliant philosophical speculations of Burke, the offspring of full and matured study, designed not so much to move present auditors, as to remain the delight of numberless generations of the British race, but rather the spontaneous dictation of a mind filled with the reasoning deducible from principles long and firmly rooted, of feelings

ardently enlisted in the success of a noble cause, and of an imagination fully awake to the splendors of the ultimate triumph. What doubtless must have added to the effect of this combination was the stimulus of antagonism, which gave its superlative force to the models of ancient oratory, and without which none can ever hope to attain its utmost degree of power over men.

Of the precise nature of these appeals no record remains, for none was ever made. The only notion which can be formed of it must be drawn from an analysis of the elements of the speaker's character. This would yield a vehement energy regardless of the refinements of rhetoric, a lofty morality, the natural offspring of a heart pure before God, confirmed in its integrity by the training of years, and a lively sensibility, which could summon for the exigency of a great cause the resources of a deeply laid, if not extended, education, as well as the treasures of a vivid fancy. The language which follows the natural outpouring of such a combination of qualities may contain the greatest amount of moral power that can be addressed by one man to the ears of his fellows, but it cannot spread an inch beyond the charmed circle. The same words would never raise the same sensations among new men, in other times and places, however carefully they might be prepared for their admiration.

It is probable that the period embraced between the 9th of February, the day of his return to Philadelphia, and the end of this year, was the most laborious and exciting of Mr. Adams's long life. Never for a moment does he appear to have lost sight of the magnitude of the work in which he had engaged. He felt, not that three millions of men were to declare their own emancipation, but that a nation was to come into being for a life of centuries. To this end he was for pushing forward at once all the preliminary steps. On the 12th of April he wrote to his wife much in the spirit of his letter to Gates, that the point, then only hoped for, had at last been gained. "The ports are opened wide enough at last, and privateers are allowed to prey upon British trade. This is not independency, you know. What is? Why, *government in every colony, a confederation among them all, and treaties with foreign nations* to acknowledge us a sovereign State, and all that. When these things will be

done, or any of them, time must discover. Perhaps the time is near, perhaps a great way off." To Patrick Henry he described the natural progress of events which he anticipated. "It has ever appeared to me," he said, "that the natural course and order of things was this; for every colony to institute a government; for all the colonies to confederate, and define the limits of the continental constitution; then, to declare the colonies a sovereign State, or a number of confederated States; and, last of all, to form treaties with foreign powers. But I fear we cannot proceed systematically, and that we shall be obliged to declare ourselves independent States, before we confederate, and, indeed, before all the colonies have established their governments." Here was the threefold cord of a system which it was certainly best to have woven evenly together at once, but yet which would not fail in strength, if labor could effect its combination in any way at all.

The manner in which Mr. Adams has himself reviewed the journals of congress during this period, and noted the course of things from day to day, with the obstructions and delays interposed in the way of action, renders it unnecessary here to do more than touch upon the chief results. Two years had effected a union of the colonies for defence, and a consequent military organization so actively engaged in the field to sustain the common cause as to dislodge the British forces from Boston, the spot where the process of compulsory obedience had been commenced. The ports, which had been injudiciously closed under the fallacious notion of foreing Great Britain to choose between concession and national bankruptcy, were now opened wide to trade, and attempts had been made to establish a temporary system of finance. Virginia had led the way in summoning an assembly for the purpose of constituting some permanent form of government, to meet the new emergency. Every thing was tending to independence, but nothing decisive had yet been done. The people of Massachusetts had declared themselves ready, whilst their delegates in Virginia and North Carolina were on the verge of a declaration; but New Hampshire was still divided, and the Middle States presented an almost unbroken front of opposition. The strongest objections came from those delegates who either had no instructions of any kind, or who pleaded positive injunctions to stay their action.

New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, rendered uneasy by rumors early in circulation of designs held by some to bring about independence, had given explicit directions that no such propositions should be listened to. And Maryland, not content with general prohibitions, had aimed a blow at John Adams, by calling in question the motives of his action. That colony instructed her delegates to move a self-denying ordinance, which should cut off the possibility of accelerating the apprehended result by influences growing out of the establishment of places of honor and profit under a new state of things. Mr. Adams was known to have accepted the post of chief justice of the revived superior court of Massachusetts. He it was, too, that was understood to be most vehement in pushing the three parts of a plan of independence. Hence the stroke aimed at him, but really intended to paralyze the vital energy of that plan. Its effect in congress seems to have been next to nothing; but it indicated a spirit of resistance in one branch of the confederacy, little auspicious of harmony in its future counsels.

Neither was the prospect of effecting favorable changes particularly cheering. Some delegates were timid, many inclined rather to recede than to go forward, and all averse to an irrevocable breach. Solicitation had been exhausted. The obstacles continued firmly fixed as ever. Nothing remained to be done but to surmount them. An appeal might be made from the representative bodies to the people themselves, and instructions procured, in their turn, for the instructors. After consultation, it seems to have been agreed that this should be done. The labor of the experiment was divided. To Samuel Chase was assigned the task of organizing county meetings in Maryland, which should overawe their respective delegates. He left Philadelphia at once, and proceeded on his errand. The condition of the New Jersey assembly not being considered so unpromising, Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant determined to resign his place in congress that he might repair to Trenton, and act with more efficiency there. With regard to Pennsylvania, the cooperation between the popular leaders of Philadelphia and their friends in congress was direct and easy. The Lees and the Adamses were on the spot, to set in motion whatever measure might be deemed likely to be of use.

Something of this kind, evidently intended to operate in the manner designated, seems to have been prepared by Mr. Adams, but it is uncertain whether it was ever acted upon. In the absence of any record in the journals of congress, which perpetuate only results, it is not possible to determine this point. A draft, in his handwriting, remains, which is deserving of notice in the progressive movements of this time. It runs as follows: —

"Whereas the present state of America and the cruel efforts of our enemies render the most perfect and cordial union of the colonies, and the utmost exertions of their strength necessary for the preservation and establishment of their liberties, therefore,

"Resolved, that it be recommended to the several assemblies and conventions of these United Colonies, who have limited the powers of their delegates in this congress by any express instructions, that they repeal or suspend those instructions for a certain time, that this congress may have power, without any unnecessary obstruction or embarrassment, to concert, direct, and order such further measures as may seem to them necessary for the defence and preservation, support and establishment of right and liberty in these colonies."

The sameness of this language with that used in the Massachusetts instructions, brought with him on his last return, shows whence Mr. Adams took his foundation. And had the other colonial assemblies been equally prepared to vest the desired discretion in their delegates, there can be no doubt that it would have sufficiently answered the purpose. The difficulty was that some of them were averse to conferring any authority that was likely to hazard an irreparable breach with the mother country; and this aversion was too well fixed to be shaken by fair-spoken supplications. But there was an objection to such a form of resolution beyond and above this. It asked for a *temporary* suspension of instructions, in order to do acts of an irrevocable character. It was measuring the intelligence of the objectors by a low standard, to suppose them not likely to see the drift of such a proposition, and if they should adopt it without seeing, it was at best gaining the object by a deception. Possibly considerations like these may have led to the laying aside of this in favor of a better measure. The tenacity of the Pennsylvania assembly had been proved a short time before. It

was not to be dissolved by solicitation. The minority, representing the popular feeling of the colony, which had been long struggling almost against hope for the adoption of its views, was wellnigh tired out. All began to see that the obstacle lay in the proprietary form of government, which gave a disproportionate share of power to particular classes, and that nothing would avail to remove it which did not strike at once at the root of its authority. Hence they began to look about for something more comprehensive and determinate.

The preparation of such a final measure seems to have been devolved upon John Adams. He brought it forward accordingly, on the sixth day of May, in the shape of a resolution. Whether it was originally in the words ultimately adopted, the journal furnishes no means of ascertaining. All that is known is, that after debate continued until the 9th, it then assumed its last shape. The wavering representatives of one colony asked another day's delay before taking the question, which was granted. On the 10th, the decision was made, and the resolution passed in these words: —

"Resolved, that it be recommended to the respective assemblies and conventions of the United Colonies, where no government sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs hath been hitherto established, to adopt such government as shall, in the opinion of the representatives of the people, best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular, and America in general."

Yet, even with this success, the result was not precisely adequate to cover the emergency. It was a recommendation, and nothing more. No necessity existed to notice it, if the assemblies were not so disposed. The Pennsylvanians, for example, could maintain that they had a government quite sufficient for the exigencies of their affairs, and, therefore, that they stood in no need of change. The force of this objection must have made itself felt in the course of the debate, for immediately after the adoption of the measure, a motion was carried to this effect: —

"Resolved, that a committee of three be appointed to prepare a preamble to the foregoing resolution.

"The members chosen, Mr. J. Adams, Mr. Rutledge, and Mr. R. H. Lee."

This committee reported a draft, on the 13th, which was debated and passed on the 15th. It was in these words: —

"Whereas his Britannic Majesty, in conjunction with the lords and commons of Great Britain, has, by a late act of parliament, excluded the inhabitants of these United Colonies from the protection of his crown; and, whereas, no answer whatever to the humble petitions of the colonies for redress of grievances and reconciliation with Great Britain has been or is likely to be given; but the whole force of that kingdom, aided by foreign mercenaries, is to be exerted for the destruction of the good people of these colonies; and, whereas, it appears absolutely irreconcilable to reason and good conscience for the people of these colonies now to take the oaths and affirmations necessary for the support of any government under the crown of Great Britain, and it is necessary that the exercise of every kind of authority under the said crown should be totally suppressed, and all the powers of government exerted under the authority of the people of the colonies, for the preservation of internal peace, virtue, and good order, as well as for the defence of their lives, liberties, and properties against the hostile invasions and cruel depredations of their enemies; therefore, resolved," &c.

This blow struck home. The next day the active members of the popular party in Philadelphia were called to meet to consider what steps should be taken *in consequence of the dissolution of their government*, as published that morning. At the same date, Mr. Adams, in writing to his friend, General Palmer, and quoting the preamble almost exactly from memory, added these words: "Yesterday the Gordian knot was cut. If such a resolution had been passed twelve months ago, as it ought to have been, and it was not my fault that it was not, how different would have been our situation! The advantages of such a measure were pointed out very particularly twelve months ago. But then we must petition and negotiate, and the people were not ripe! I believe they were as ripe then as they are now."

The resistance to this measure continued strenuous even after it was felt to be unavailing. Mr. Duane protested against it, to the last. He called it "a piece of mechanism to work out independence; but he supposed the votes had been numbered, and it must pass." He did not overrate its importance. The

foundation of the British authority had been subverted. The people were now the only source of power.

The seventeenth of May was Sunday. Mr. Adams went to hear the Rev. Mr. Duffield preach upon the signs of the times, who likened the conduct of George the Third to that of Pharaoh to the Israelites, and concluded that Providence intended the liberation of the Americans, as it had done theirs. The auditor returned home, and, writing to his wife, thus followed out the train of ideas occasioned by the discourse.

"Is it not a saying of Moses, 'Who am I, that I should go in and out before this great people?' When I consider the great events which are passed, and those greater which are rapidly advancing, and that I may have been instrumental in touching some springs, and turning some small wheels, which have had and will have such effects, I feel an awe upon my mind, which is not easily described. Great Britain has at last driven America to the last step, a complete separation from her; a total, absolute independence, not only of her parliament, but of her crown. For such is the amount of the resolve of the 15th. Confederation among ourselves or alliances with foreign nations are not necessary to a perfect separation from Britain. That is effected by extinguishing all authority under the crown, parliament, and nation, as the resolution for instituting governments has done to all intents and purposes. Confederation will be necessary for our internal concord, and alliances may be so for our external defence."

But although the stronghold of British authority had been laid in ruins, something was left to do in order to overcome the inertness that follows the abandonment of active opposition. In Pennsylvania, where resistance had been the most dogged, and at which the stroke of the 15th of May had been especially aimed, it was not enough simply to take the strength out of the assembly. A new power was to be created in its place, a power based upon the popular will. This necessity had been foreseen and provided for. Five days after the passage of the preamble, the public meeting was held of the citizens of Philadelphia, at which it was determined to act at once upon its recommendation. The mode selected was an invitation to the people of the different counties in the province to send committees to a *conference* in Philadelphia, to mature the arrangements

for calling a convention of the people. The ball thus set rolling, could no longer be checked in its course. It was in vain that the old assembly manifested a disposition to yield so far as to rescind the obnoxious instructions which had occasioned the trouble. The few of the minority who had long clung to the hope of bringing it at last into line, had been compelled to abandon it. Many members ceased to attend its deliberations, and the body showed signs of incurable languor, the forerunner of speedy dissolution. In the mean while the conference of committees took place on the 18th of June, and the next day they unanimously passed the following vote: —

"Resolved, that the government of this province is not competent to the exigencies of our affairs."

After that, nothing, of course, was left but to make arrangements to provide, as early as possible, a substitute. Through all the proceedings there is reason to presume that the chief agents were acting in constant consultation with the leading advocates of independence in congress.

Things were now verging on every side to the same point. North Carolina had conferred the necessary powers to vote for independence and foreign alliances as early as the 12th of April. And now came the news from Richard Lee,[1] to Mr. Adams, that on the very day of the passage of the significant preamble in congress, the 15th of May, the convention of Virginia had gone a step further, and had *instructed* their delegates to propose independence. Authority to assent to its natural consequences, a confederation and foreign alliances, followed as a matter of course. On the other hand, the convention of Massachusetts had referred the subject back to the people, to be considered and acted upon at their primary town meetings, and the responses had been for some time coming in unequivocally enough. So decided was the feeling that Joseph Hawley, impatient of the delay, was stimulating the nowise reluctant Gerry to greater exertions. Perceiving these encouraging indications in opposite quarters, the friends of independence now consulted together, and made up their minds that the moment had come for a

[1] A delegate from the county of Westmoreland, and *not* Richard Henry Lee, who was in congress at the time. In the earlier impressions of this work, a mistake was made in printing this letter and the answer to it, of which it is proper here to give notice. See vol. ix. pp. 374–5, 389.

final demonstration. Resolutions, embracing the three great points, were carefully matured, which it was arranged that Richard Henry Lee, on behalf of the delegates of Virginia, should present, and John Adams should second, for Massachusetts. The movement took place, accordingly, on the 7th of June. It appears on the journal, recorded with the customary caution, as follows: —

"Certain resolutions respecting independency being moved and seconded, —

"Resolved, that the consideration of them be referred till to-morrow morning; and that the members be enjoined to attend punctually at ten o'clock, in order to take the same into their consideration."

It was well that a measure of so momentous a character should be accompanied with as much of the forms of notice and special assignment as the body could properly give to it.

The record of what passed at the appointed time has come down to us very barren of details. We only know that the resolutions were referred to the committee of the whole, where they were debated with great spirit during that day, Saturday, and again on Monday, the 10th, by which time it had become quite clear that a majority of the colonies were prepared to adopt the first and leading resolution. This majority was composed of the four New England, and three out of the four southern colonies. But it being deemed unadvisable to place this great act upon so narrow a basis, and a prospect being held out of securing a more general concurrence by delaying the decision, a postponement until the first of July was effected by a change of the votes of two colonies. In the mean while, however, as it was thought suitable to accompany the act with an elaborate exposition of the causes which were held to justify it, a committee was ordered to have in charge the preparation of such a paper in season for the adjourned debate.

But it was not on this point alone that the action of the members was in the nature of a foregone conclusion. It is plain that the greater number of those who yet hesitated, were only held back by considerations of expediency from committing themselves openly to what they felt was as inevitable as it was in all respects right and proper. A strong proof of this is to be found in the fact, that on the 11th of June the two great corol-

laries of the main proposition were taken up and adopted. At the same time that Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston, all but the last named being of the movement, were appointed the committee to prepare a declaration, as mentioned, the congress formally voted a second committee, with powers to prepare and digest a form of confederation to be entered into between the colonies; and yet a third, to mature a plan of treaties to be proposed to foreign powers. In this compass were included all the elements of national sovereignty abroad and at home. The contest of the preceding year had not been conducted without its effect in exalting the merchants, and lawyers, and planters, and mechanics of a new and obscure region, remote from the great centres of civilization, into a body of statesmen alive to the consciousness of a position from which they were to provide new channels for the political instruction of the world.

On the 12th of June, the members were selected to serve on the last named committees. Of the Massachusetts delegates, Samuel Adams was assigned to the first, whilst John Adams was placed on that which related to foreign powers. He was, however, surrounded by men not of his counsels. John Dickinson, Harrison, and Robert Morris constituted a majority of the committee, and hitherto they had not been of the pioneers.

Still another positive measure followed. The journal of the same day records that —

"Congress took into consideration the report of the committee on a war-office; whereupon —

"Resolved, that a committee of congress be appointed by the name of a board of war and ordnance, to consist of five members."

The members appointed to this committee, the next day, were J. Adams, Sherman, Harrison, Wilson, and E. Rutledge; and Richard Peters was elected secretary. Of the five named, only the first two had been numbered as of the movement; but this distinction was rapidly waning out.

These successive elections sufficiently display the change which was passing over the spirit of the congress. Samuel and John Adams were rapidly advancing in influence. The former was on the committee to prepare a form of confederation. The latter was second on that to report a declaration of independ-

ence, the lead, as usual, being given to Virginia; he was likewise on the committee of five, to prepare a plan of treaties with foreign nations, associated with but a single coadjutor in the struggle to arrive at that object, Dr. Franklin; and he was placed at the head of the bureau designed to be the channel through which congress proposed to direct the war. No more decisive testimony to his energy could have been given by that body. A few days before these events, Mr. Adams had written to William Cushing a letter in which he had indulged his fancy in fixing the term of his necessary labors, before he could come and take his place beside his friend on the bench of the superior court.

"Objects," he said, "of the most stupendous magnitude, and measures in which the lives and liberties of millions yet unborn are intimately interested, are now before us. We are in the very midst of a revolution the most complete, unexpected, and remarkable of any in the history of nations. A few important subjects must be dispatched before I can return to my family. Every colony must be induced to institute a perfect government. All the colonies must confederate together in some solemn bond of union. The congress must declare the colonies free and independent States, and ambassadors must be sent abroad to foreign courts, to solicit their acknowledgment of us as sovereign States, and to form with them, at least with some of them, commercial treaties of friendship and alliance. When these things are once completed, I shall think that I have answered the end of my creation, and sing my *nunc dimittis*, return to my farm, ride circuits, plead law, or judge causes, just which you please."

This scarcely brilliant prospect of early release was not much brightened by the superaddition on all the objects specified of the duties of a board of war. What they were to be, was defined at the time it was created. They embraced the keeping an alphabetical and accurate register of the names of all the officers of the army, with their rank and the dates of their commissions; likewise regular accounts of the state and disposition of the troops, to be obtained by returning officers wherever they were stationed; also the keeping exact accounts of all the artillery and other implements of war, and directing the care and preservation of them when not in actual service; the

care of forwarding all dispatches from congress to the colonies and armies, and all money designed for this service; the superintendence of the raising and dispatching all the land forces ordered for service; the care and direction of prisoners of war; and, lastly, the preservation, in regular order, of all original letters and papers whatever, received in the course of their business, and the recording of all dispatches and letters sent forth. In other words, congress contemplated the transformation of a delegate from their own body into a war minister, charged, for an indefinite period, with an amount and variety of duties, which in themselves, and separated from every other labor, would task to the utmost the abilities, physical and intellectual, of the strongest man.

In connection with this reduction to system of the conduct of the war, Mr. Adams was the agent in carrying through another measure of importance, not merely in a military, but in a political sense. On the 25th of May, a very large committee, upon which he was placed third, after the Virginia members, Harrison and Lee, had been appointed to confer with Generals Washington, Gates, and Mifflin, and to concert a plan of military operations for the next campaign. This committee reported five days later, and their report was debated in committee of the whole until the 5th of June, when they recommended to the House, among other things, the following resolve: —

"That a committee of five be appointed to consider what is proper to be done with persons giving intelligence to the enemy, or supplying them with provisions."

This resolution was adopted, and the members chosen were J. Adams, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Rutledge, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Livingston.

This, which is called in the journal the committee on spies, reported on the 17th of June. The report was taken up a week later, and without discussion, in committee of the whole, the following resolutions, making a part of it, were adopted: —

"Resolved, that all persons abiding within any of the United Colonies, and deriving protection from the laws of the same, owe allegiance to the said laws, and are members of such colony; and that all persons passing through, visiting, or making a temporary stay in any of the said colonies, being entitled to the protection of the laws during the time of such passage,

visitation, or temporary stay, owe, during the same, allegiance thereto.

"That all persons, members of or owing allegiance to any of the United Colonies, as before described, who shall levy war against any of the said colonies within the same, or be adherent to the king of Great Britain, or other enemies of the said colonies, or any of them, within the same, giving to him or them aid and comfort, are guilty of treason against such colony.

"That it be recommended to the legislatures of the several United Colonies to pass laws for punishing, in such manner as to them shall seem fit, such persons before described, as shall be provably attainted of open deed by people of their condition, of any of the treason before described.

"Resolved, that it be recommended to the several legislatures of the United Colonies to pass laws for punishing, in such manner as they shall think fit, persons who shall counterfeit, or aid or abet in counterfeiting, the continental bills of credit, or who shall pass any such bill in payment, knowing the same to be counterfeit."

The rest of the report was recommitted.

Under the semblance of a provision against spies and informers, here was a clear attribution of all the rights of absolute sovereignty which had belonged only to George the Third, to the new and self-constituted authority of the American people. These resolutions drew a sharp line between all persons who should and all who should not recognize this new authority, subjecting the latter class, whether natives or strangers temporarily present, to the penalties of *treason* in case they were found adhering to the British king, or to any persons abetting his cause. No chance was left open for the profession of neutrality, for even that was assumed to imply citizenship, and therefore to be embraced within the new jurisdiction. The effect of such a stroke upon all those persons, and they were not a few in the middle colonies, who were inclined to persevere in keeping out of the Union, is obvious. It made them aliens and strangers, and subjected their action to rigid supervision. Thus many were thought likely to become far better reconciled to an immediate declaration of independence, when it had been made clear that no equivocal position could be longer maintained by pushing it off.

The remainder of the history, which terminated in the grand result in congress, may be briefly given. The bulk of opposition now centred in the five middle colonies, and the pillar upon which it leaned was John Dickinson. But under the combined assaults conducted by the leading colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts, it was plain that victory was become a mere question of time. Jonathan D. Sergeant, who had left congress to hasten a change in the counsels of New Jersey, had been so successful in spiriting up the assembly as to be able to write, on the 15th of June to Mr. Adams, that the delegates about to be elected would be on the spot by the 1st of July, the day to which the question had been assigned, and that they would "*vote plump.*"[1] Equally favorable news soon came from Maryland. It was in vain that her convention, under the guidance of some of her delegates in congress, had refused to recognize the necessity of reorganizing her government, as pointed out in the preamble to the resolve of the 15th of May. It was in vain that they had reiterated their instructions to resist independence to the utmost. The volunteered mission of Samuel Chase to the constituents of the recalcitrating delegates proved more than a match for all their stubbornness. By the 28th of June he found his appeals to them, to instruct the instructors, had been crowned with such success as to justify him in dispatching an express from the convention with the gratifying intelligence of a unanimous vote in that body in favor of independence. Thus were two States secured. But Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New York yet remained to move. In the first of these, recourse was had once more to the so called committees of conference, the offspring of the memorable preamble. And here, on the 23d of June, Dr. Benjamin Rush, then a young man, but acting entirely in sympathy and coöperation with the leaders in congress, moved and carried the appointment of a committee to

[1] Strangely enough, a passage is found in a printed letter of Samuel Adams, dated eleven days after the Declaration of Independence, purporting that "the delegates from New Jersey had not been empowered to give their voice on either side." A statement so obviously in contradiction to the fact is calculated to excite surprise. But a closer examination of the text justifies the inference that an error was made either in writing or printing, and that *New York* was meant instead of *New Jersey*. With this correction, it reads in perfect conformity with well-known facts. Yet this error, however committed, has already misled some later writers. It is corrected in Force's *American Archives*. Lee's *Memoir of R. H. Lee*, vol. i. p. 182, 183.

declare the sense of the conference with respect to an independence of the province on the crown of Great Britain. He and James Smith were then joined with Thomas McKean, the chairman of the conference, in a committee, which was ready the next day with a report affirming the willingness of the deputies of the conference to concur in a vote declaring the United Colonies free and independent States. The report was adopted unanimously, was presented to congress on the 25th, and, doubtless, had its effect in determining those delegates of the colony to absent themselves on the final vote, upon whose resistance its adverse decision depended. As the hesitation of Delaware was chiefly owing to the feeling that pervaded the county of Sussex, Mr. Rodney had repaired thither for the purpose of bringing about a favorable change, in which errand the news came that he was laboring with success. The delegates from New York, no longer interposing any active opposition, yet unwilling to assume a responsibility which their constituents had not authorized, preferred to withdraw from participation in the decision.

Such was the state of affairs on the 1st of July, to which day the discussion had been adjourned. There was then little doubt of an affirmative vote on the part of all but four colonies. Yet two causes remained for continuing the debate. The delegates newly elected from New Jersey, though empowered to vote for independence, if they saw fit, were yet anxious, before deciding, to be possessed of the reasoning which had been presented in congress on both sides of the question. In addition to this, John Dickinson was desirous of placing himself so distinctly on the record as to release his name from the awful responsibility which might follow a disastrous issue of the decision. These reasons will account for the reopening of the question, which might otherwise be attributed to the same frivolous personal considerations which have so often, in more peaceful times, served uselessly to delay decisions of deliberative assemblies upon the most important concerns.

There is no record left of this day's debate. Richard Henry Lee, the mover of the resolution, had been called home. Mr. Jefferson was no speaker. George Wythe was sensible, but not eloquent. Witherspoon was clear, but a little heavy. The debating talent must be admitted to have preponderated on the

opposite side. It claimed John Dickinson and James Wilson, of Pennsylvania; Robert R. Livingston, of New York, and Edward Rutledge, of South Carolina; the latter, described by Patrick Henry as the most elegant speaker in the first congress. How many of them took part in this day's proceedings, it is not possible to say. That Mr. Dickinson did, is certain. The opposition, which was dying away everywhere else, was still a living principle within his breast. Yet it was the resistance of a patriot aiming to avert what he viewed as the greatest dangers for his country, without the alloy of faction or of bad faith. Dickinson had reflected long and deeply on the merits of the controversy; his convictions had thus far carried him along with America, if not boldly, at least honestly; and he had little reason to count upon any mercy from Great Britain from his course, in case victory should declare for her. His action must be resolved into the hesitation of wealthy conservatism at taking an irrevocable step, rather than want of public spirit or of personal courage. He preferred that others should decide this point of independence, even though, as the issue shows, he was fully prepared to bear his share of the danger that would follow persistence in it. This last speech was, therefore, a solemn protest to relieve his conscience, should the darkness come which no reasonable man could deny to be a possible, perhaps a probable consequence of this adventurous plunge. It appears to have been respectfully received, as is usual where the weight of individual character gives authority to opinions even the most unwelcome. And though it wrought no change in the convictions of the majority, it inspired in them a sense of the necessity of some restatement of the affirmative position.

The duty of making it fell naturally upon Mr. Adams, who had long been regarded as the champion of that side, and who was unquestionably the only eloquent man then present to defend it. Of his speech, not a word has been transmitted to posterity. But all the accounts given by persons present agree in representing it as having been in the highest class of oratory. His vigorous mind had been so long fraught with the subject in all its details, and his fifteen months' labors in congress had given so complete a familiarity with their treatment, that nothing was needed, beyond an occasion, to enlist the earnestness of his nature, and "the numbers came." A

speech, made under such an impulse, may not, when submitted to the cooler examination of a critic in the closet, sustain the reputation earned for it in the delivery, but to a listener it approaches much nearer to the voice of inspiration than more elaborate efforts. The fires of Demosthenes, of Cicero, and of Burke were lighted at the midnight lamp, for the illumination of the world whilst time shall endure. But Chatham, Patrick Henry, Mirabeau, and John Adams will be handed down as great orators mainly by the concurring testimony of those who witnessed the effects they produced. The "deep conceptions and nervous style," which made Mr. Adams stand forth in the memory of Jefferson, who had the strongest reasons for retaining an indelible impression of the scene, as "the colossus of independence" on the floor of congress, "which," as he further declares, "gave him a power of thought and expression which moved the members from their seats," which sent Richard Stockton home, testifying that he was "the atlas of independence," and the Virginians, never unwilling to give their own citizens the palm, but always susceptible of generous impulses, "to fill every mouth in the ancient dominion with the praises due to the comprehensiveness of his views, the force of his arguments, and the boldness of his patriotism," will be remembered only by this testimony. Yet great as the impression was upon others, it is very clear that he never looked upon himself as having done much more than usual. In a letter, addressed to Samuel Chase, on the evening after the debate, he speaks of it all as an idle waste of time, for that nothing had been said which had not been hackneyed in that room for six months before. To him the concentration of feeling had been in the struggle whilst the issue was doubtful, and when he was grappling with great odds. Now that it was really over, the difficulties removed, and victory assured, nothing further was called for except a few tricks of fence for the edification of the bystanders, in which he took no satisfaction. To him it was a pageant, and nothing more.

Yet there is one tone left of the passion of that hour, which, even now, comes upon the ear like the dying fall of distant music. It would seem as if the mighty agitation of that boisterous period could not settle away into perfect calm, without reflecting a few of the sparkles that yet crested the subsiding

waves. Something like this may be observed in the memorable letter of Mr. Adams to his wife, penned on the 3d of July, after the final vote was taken upon Lee's resolution of the 7th of June. With much of that spirit of profound speculation, which so greatly distinguishes the writer among the active men of his time, this paper likewise shows the glow not yet entirely departed, which had fired his bosom and his brain in the contest so triumphantly concluded. In this spirit he breaks forth thus: —

"Yesterday, the greatest question was decided which ever was debated in America, and a greater, perhaps, never was, nor will be decided among men. A resolution was passed, without one dissenting colony, 'that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, and as such they have, and of right ought to have, full power to make war, conclude peace, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which other States may rightfully do.' You will see, in a few days, a declaration setting forth the causes which have impelled us to this mighty revolution, and the reasons which will justify it in the sight of God and man. A plan of confederation will be taken up in a few days.

"When I look back to the year 1761, and recollect the argument concerning writs of assistance in the superior court, which I have hitherto considered as the commencement of the controversy between Great Britain and America, and run through the whole period, from that time to this, and recollect the series of political events, the chain of causes and effects, I am surprised at the suddenness as well as greatness of this revolution. Britain has been filled with folly, and America with wisdom. At least, this is my judgment. Time must determine. It is the will of Heaven that the two countries should be sundered forever. It may be the will of Heaven that America shall suffer calamities still more wasting, and distresses yet more dreadful. If this is to be the case, it will have this good effect at least; it will inspire us with many virtues which we have not, and correct many errors, follies, and vices, which threaten to disturb, dishonor, and destroy us. The furnace of affliction produces refinement in States as well as individuals. And the new governments we are assuming, in every part, will require a purification from our vices, and an augmentation of our virtues, or they will be no blessings. The people will have unbounded power,

and the people are extremely addicted to corruption and venality as well as the great. But I must submit all my hopes and fears to an overruling Providence, in which, unfashionable as the faith may be, I firmly believe.

"Had a declaration of independency been made seven months ago, it would have been attended with many great and glorious effects. We might before this hour have formed alliances with foreign states. We should have mastered Quebec, and been in possession of Canada.

"You will, perhaps, wonder how such a declaration would have influenced our affairs in Canada; but if I could write with freedom, I could easily convince you that it would, and explain to you the manner how. Many gentlemen in high stations and of great influence have been duped by the ministerial bubble of commissioners to treat. And in real, sincere expectation of this event, which they so fondly wished, they have been slow and languid in promoting measures for the reduction of that province. Others there are in the colonies, who really wished that our enterprise in Canada would be defeated, that the colonies might be brought into danger and distress between two fires, and be thus induced to submit. Others really wished to defeat the expedition to Canada, lest the conquest of it should elevate the minds of the people too much to hearken to those terms of reconciliation, which they believed would be offered us. These jarring views, wishes, and designs occasioned an opposition to many salutary measures, which were proposed for the support of that expedition, and caused obstructions, embarrassments, and studied delays, which have finally lost us the province. All these causes, however, in conjunction, would not have disappointed us, if it had not been for a misfortune which could not be foreseen, and, perhaps, could not have been prevented. I mean the prevalence of the smallpox among our troops. This fatal pestilence completed our destruction. It is a frown of Providence upon us, which we ought to lay to heart.

"But, on the other hand, the delay of this declaration to this time has many great advantages attending it. The hopes of reconciliation, which were fondly entertained by multitudes of honest and well-meaning, though weak and mistaken people, have been gradually, and, at last, totally extinguished. Time has been given for the whole people maturely to consider the

great question of independence, and to ripen their judgments, dissipate their fears, and allure their hopes, by discussing it in newspapers and pamphlets, by debating it in assemblies, conventions, committees of safety and inspection, in town and county meetings, as well as in private conversations, so that the whole people, in every colony of the thirteen, have now adopted it as their own act. This will cement the Union, and avoid those heats, and perhaps convulsions, which might have been occasioned by such a declaration six months ago.

"But the day is past. The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epocha in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward, forevermore.

"You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this declaration, and support and defend these States. Yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is more than worth all the means. And that posterity will triumph in that day's transaction, even although we should rue it, which I trust in God we shall not."

The reference in this letter to the 2d of July, is to the true decision upon independence involved in the adoption of the resolution of the seventh of June. The discussion and vote which followed upon the *form* of a declaration of the reasons for taking this step, is a separate affair. The committee to whom the task of preparing a suitable paper had been intrusted, had made its report on the 28th of June. Mr. Jefferson, though younger than Mr. Adams and Dr. Franklin, had been placed at its head, not less in deference to the leading position of Virginia than to his well-merited reputation for a matchless felicity in embodying popular ideas. The composition of the paper thus devolved upon him. There is some discrepancy in the accounts of the later proceedings given by the chief actors, which it is hard to reconcile. Mr. Jefferson's is, that he communicated his draft to

Mr. Adams and to Dr. Franklin separately, because they were the two members of whose judgment he wished most to have the benefit; and that all the corrections which they made were those that were visible on the paper in their own handwriting. Mr. Adams's is, that Mr. Jefferson and he acted as a subcommittee, and reviewed the paper critically, without making or suggesting an alteration. In the face of both these statements remains a copy of the original draft of Mr. Jefferson, in the handwriting of Mr. Adams, taken *before* the numerous erasures, alterations, and interlineations were made by Mr. Jefferson's own hand, which appear in the fac-simile published by his grandson. This, at least, shows that the paper was much more changed after it had been submitted to Mr. Adams than either statement would seem to imply.[1] For the present purpose, it is enough to know that, as Mr. Jefferson wrote the paper, so the labor of "figbting fearlessly for every word of it," in the three days' debate which ensued in congress after it was reported, fell almost exclusively upon Mr. Adams. Mr. Jefferson "thought it his duty to be a passive auditor of the opinions of others," which he admits to have been expressed "in acrimonious criticisms on some of its parts, that made him writhe a little." Several passages were altered in deference to the lingering hopes of reconciliation of some, or to the tender consciences of others, but the tenacity of Mr. Adams saved its substance, which will remain to a distant future, to inspire a far more perfect system of liberty than any social community has ever yet, in its practice, carried out. On the fourth of July the Declaration of Independence was approved and signed by all the members present. So far the battle had been fought and won; but the heaviest part of the labor yet remained, which was to make the brave words good by braver deeds.

Neither was it here that the men of the Revolution showed themselves wanting. They well knew the nature of the task they had undertaken, and the extent of the labors and sacrifices required to execute it. Enthusiasts they were in one sense, for nothing truly noble is done in life without that element in greater or less measure. But visionaries they certainly were

[1] It is said that a similar copy, in the handwriting of Dr. Franklin, has been discovered in England, and is in the hands of an American gentleman in London.

not. They had in their favor not so much the ability to overcome their adversary by positive victories, as that of endurance under defeat. The rugged will may be broken in small islands, or in cities and their immediate dependencies, where the surface can be measured by a physical force, but it escapes from subjection in the indefinite expanse of a continent. This consideration alone made the Declaration of Independence a reasonable act, without reference to the amount of aid which it might secure from the favor or the rivalry of foreign powers. But there is another and a more important light in which it is to be regarded. It implied powers of self-control and self-government as yet untried. Had the directors of these movements subsequently proved wanting in the art of reconstructing the fabric of society; had the issue been anarchy, and decline in civilization, refinement, and whatever goes to make the human family happy, intelligent, moral, and religious, the failure would have reacted upon the past, and stamped all their professions with folly. Europe and America have, since this period, abounded in examples of this discordance between grand beginnings and paltry endings. To posterity, all those who boldly commence, only to fail at last, appear heavily responsible for the vast amount of misery which their attempt necessarily entails upon their fellow-men. "Man," says the historian Gibbon, herein following the thought of a practical statesman, Cicero, "man has much more to fear from the passions of his fellow-creatures than from the convulsions of the elements." It is, therefore, not every one that simply succeeds in lifting from his fellows any yoke, however oppressive, who merits to be remembered as a benefactor; for he may yet become the means of subjecting them to sufferings, from the absence of needful restraint, a thousand times greater than those averted. Another test must be applied by weighing the compensations to his country which follow its sacrifices. "I can see," said Mr. Adams in the letter already quoted, "that the end is worth all the means." But with him, those means were but beginning at this moment of victory. The sequel will show that thirteen years, in which he never relaxed his share of exertion, were yet to pass, before he could be said really to have earned the honors his country has been disposed to award him for his services as "the colossus of independence" in their great federal council.

CHAPTER V.

Conference with Lord Howe — Origin of Parties — Foreign and Domestic Policy — Services in Congress, from July, 1776, until November, 1777.

The declaration of the causes which justified the separation from Great Britain was but a form; yet it was of that sort of forms which sometimes produce greater effects even than the substance. It was then, and has ever since been confounded in many minds with the act itself for which it assigned the justification. Its influence at the moment was strictly subordinate to that of the event it defended, and it has only been in later times that the living force of its abstract principles has been perceived to expand beyond the nation over the ever widening circle of mankind. The reading of it was hailed with the utmost satisfaction in the Southern States and in New England, in which the public expectation had already anticipated the result. The army seems to have accepted it as a matter of course; whilst, in the Middle States, the event absorbed by far the greatest share of attention, because it brought to a crisis the long standing differences of sentiment among the population. It was the signal for an open secession of a few men of property who had till now gone with the movement, but who made it the excuse either for joining the British forces, or for shrinking into seclusion. The members of the Society of Friends, always averse to war, and at no time cordial to any measure suspected to come from Massachusetts, henceforward assumed a state of cautious neutrality. With these exceptions, the communities in question entered upon their new condition cheerfully enough. Some leading men still thought it all premature, but they preferred to follow the lead of their countrymen to the purchase of British leniency by deserting them. Among these were John Dickinson and Robert Morris, John Jay, Wil-

liam Livingston, and James Duane, men whose purity of motive in the course they marked out for themselves, was thus placed beyond the reach of suspicion. Yet honest and capable as they ever had been, their power was no longer in the ascendant in the federal assembly. It had at last given way before that of the Lees and the Adamses, the persons whom they had always most deeply distrusted, and whose system of policy had met with their unvarying opposition.

Most particularly had this great event established the position of John Adams in congress and in the country. The masculine energy of his eloquence, developed, as it had been, in the steady exposition of a consistent course of action, had placed him in the highest rank among the leaders of the movement. The immediate consequences were made visible in the multitude of duties showered upon him from this time until he left the body in the autumn of the succeeding year. Notwithstanding the burden under which he continually labored as chairman of the board of war, through the most disastrous and gloomy period of the struggle, his name and his agency are visible in shaping, to some extent, every part of the rising system. His own record may be consulted to furnish an idea how various and extensive were the calls upon him. He is to be traced, in the journals of congress, as a member of more than ninety different committees, and he served in others which do not appear, as sometimes the names are not there recorded. He was the chairman of at least twenty-five. As the head of the committee already mentioned, which reported the rules concerning allegiance, he was instructed to draw up, anew, the articles of war. He took a leading part in that which was directed to pave the way for alliances with foreign states, as will presently be made more fully to appear. He shared in the discussions upon the proposed form of confederation between the States, and bare record against some of the defects which ultimately brought it to nothing. He animated the organization of a naval force, which from that day to the end of his life was ever a cherished feature of his national system. And all this, during the period of almost constant reverses, in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, which ended in the possession of Philadelphia by the British commander, and the hasty dispersion of the members into the interior, until they could reas-

semble at York. More than once, in this space of time, even his undaunted spirit was brought to admit that the chances of ultimate defeat were preponderant. But it made not the smallest difference in his exertions. Throughout the period of sixteen months, until the victory over General Burgoyne, which, in its connection with the French alliance, is now known to have turned the scale in the minds of the British minister, dispelling his last hopes of recovering America, all the energies of Mr. Adams, body and soul, were devoted to the maintenance of the cause in which every thing to him worth living for was irretrievably embarked.

One special occasion for action happened not long after the decision in favor of independence. At the very moment of voting, General Howe was landing his troops at Staten Island, whilst his brother, the Admiral, was rapidly nearing the coast, charged with what was called the true olive branch, in contradistinction to that other one which had been brought from America by Richard Penn, and which had been so summarily rejected. It was the expectation of such a mission that had done much to protract the resistance which delayed the declaration; and even the interposition of that obstacle did not quite do away with a hope in some breasts that a reconciliation might yet be effected in spite of it. That hope was still alive in congress, animating a few of its members, and rendering them earnest to keep open the avenues of negotiation. Yet although Lord Howe's delay was imputed by himself to his labors to obtain from ministers more liberal powers to treat, the sum of them all, as ascertained from his own admissions, seems to have fallen infinitely below the expectations of those most favorably disposed to listen to him in America. Hence it happened that his first indirect communications with congress were conducted in a manner that cut off all prospect of success by such means. His proclamation showed him standing as one armed with the ability to compel obedience, but yet empowered to temper justice with mercy, upon evidence of suitable contrition for past errors. With such pretensions, no member of congress, however much disposed to enter into negotiation with him, could venture to whisper a word in his behalf. Neither were his later measures a whit more skilfully taken. With the peculiar formality of that day, he stuck at the

threshold of etiquette in refusing to acknowledge an organization called out by the voice of a continent in arms, and directly before his eyes, though it was all along his intention and desire ultimately to negotiate with it. Thus even the victory on Long Island, upon which he had most surely counted to bring the rebellious to reason, was deprived of the force which it might have had but for the want of direct and manly frankness. During this period, Mr. Adams was on the watch for every symptom of vacillation, and earnestly exerting himself to keep up the tone of congress to absolute preclusion of any opening for it. And when at last General John Sullivan, one of the prisoners taken on Long Island, was sent to Philadelphia the bearer of a proposal of a conference, on terms which he either misinterpreted, or which were afterwards disavowed, Howe was fated to find that defeat had done little to damp their courage.

Mr. Adams strenuously insisted that the overture should be permitted to pass wholly without notice. But in this he found himself once more outrunning the disposition of the majority. When New Hampshire, Connecticut, and even Virginia gave way, it was of no use for him further to resist. He has given an account of this matter, so clear that it supersedes the necessity of adding to it. He wrote to Mrs. Adams, on the 6th of September, as follows: —

"This day, I think, has been the most remarkable of all. Sullivan came here from Lord Howe, five days ago, with a message, that his lordship desired a half hour's conversation with some of the members of congress in their private capacities. We have spent three or four days in debating whether we should take any notice of it. I have, to the utmost of my abilities, during the whole time, opposed our taking any notice of it. But at last it was determined by a majority that 'the congress being the representatives of the free and independent States of America, it was improper to appoint any of their members to confer in their private characters with his lordship. But they would appoint a committee of their body to wait on him, to know whether he had power to treat with congress upon terms of peace, and to hear any propositions that his lordship may think proper to make.'

"When the committee came to be balloted for, Dr. Franklin and your humble servant were unanimously chosen. Colonel

R. H. Lee and Mr. Rutledge had an equal number; but upon a second vote, Mr. Rutledge was chosen. I requested to be excused, but was desired to consider of it until to-morrow. My friends here advise me to go. All the stanch and intrepid are very earnest with me to go, and the timid and wavering, if any such there are, agree in the request. So I believe I shall undertake the journey. I doubt whether his lordship will see us, but the same committee will be directed to inquire into the state of the army at New York, so that there will be business enough, if his lordship makes none. It would fill this letter-book to give you all the arguments for and against this measure, if I had liberty to attempt it. His lordship seems to have been playing off a number of Machiavelian manœuvres, in order to throw upon us the odium of continuing this war. Those who have been advocates for the appointment of this committee are for opposing manœuvre to manœuvre, and are confident that the consequence will be that the odium will fall upon him. However this may be, my lesson is plain, to ask a few questions and take his answers."

Whatever else may be said of Lord Howe, it is certainly a mistake to suppose him to have been possessed of the arts taught by Machiavel. He was a plain, well-meaning man, disposed, as far as he knew how, to restore peace and reconcile conflicting interests. His mission was but the natural sequence of certain efforts which had been initiated with Franklin before his departure from London. It forms a part of a series of inadequate concessions, always coming a day too late, which will render the policy of Lord North ever a memorable lesson to statesmen. It might in stronger hands have proved a formidable engine, not so much of conciliation as of division among the Americans. As it was, it was shivered to atoms upon a scruple of form! From the tone of a letter to John Adams, it is certain that the announcement of the conference had excited serious concern in the mind of Samuel Adams. The resolution of congress, accepting it, had carefully avoided mentioning independence as an obstacle to peace. The popular confidence, in the Middle States, never very firm, had fallen very considerably, under the effect of General Howe's easy triumph around New York, and the advance of the war into the heart of New Jersey. It must then have been with

great satisfaction that Samuel Adams, at this time at home, received from his correspondent his account of the termination of the conference. That account is given elsewhere in these volumes.[1] Nothing more is necessary to prove the utter incompetency of Howe to the task which he had assumed. He had not taken the trouble to understand the causes of the difference. To him it stood merely as a quarrel in the family, where he might come in as intercessor, and beg the father not to be hard upon the children, provided he could persuade them, in their turn, to pray forgiveness and promise amendment. All this kind of reasoning, if it ever could have had any force, was utterly thrown away after the Fourth of July. The colonies had gone too far, longer to consent to be regarded as a wayward progeny. They now asked to be recognized as having reached the age of maturity, and as responsible for their own acts. To such a request, Lord Howe could not assent even in form, much less in substance, so that the mighty edifice of conciliation proved to be a mere castle in the air. Then it was that the Lees and the Adamses could take pleasure in the reflection, that mainly by their efforts independence had not been put off. They might, indeed, have included in their gratulation the listlessness of the minister at home, and the mild inertness of his diplomatic agents. Some men might even then have at least sown the seeds of discord, to germinate and bear fruit at later stages of the war. What they actually did, was to prevent their growing. The result of the conference with Lord Howe only tended the more to convince the doubting that reconciliation was out of the question. Mr. Adams returned to his duties, fortified by the prediction he had made that the conference would end in nothing, and that Great Britain would not prove in earnest in her offers. Indeed, throughout this history, it was the fate of that country never to be in season with any measure, either of restraint or conciliation. The amiable Lord Howe had been sent with an olive branch whilst his brother held the sword, and neither proved a true symbol, in the way that they chose respectively to wield them.

In all of the discussions which had preceded the Declaration of Independence, one argument had been urged in its favor

[1] Vol. ix. p. 443.

with great earnestness and no trifling effect. This was, that neither France nor Spain, to whom the patriots might look with not ill-grounded hopes of aid, could be relied upon to deviate from the policy of neutrality, so long as the disruption between the mother country and the colonies should not be placed beyond recall. Hence it happened that independence and foreign alliances were terms almost always used in the same breath, and the second step was viewed as an inevitable consequence of taking the first. No sooner was the sense of the majority gathered from the debate that took place upon Mr. Lee's first resolution of the seventh of June, than, in the contemplation of its passage, a committee was appointed to mature a form of treaty to be proposed to foreign powers. The names and the political character of this committee have been given already. Mr. Adams, who had been strenuous in advocating the policy which it proposed to initiate, was one of its members, in conjunction, however, with persons, most of whom could scarcely be regarded as likely to take the burden of measures legitimately the consequence of that policy. The responsibility of action seems in this way to have been shared between Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams, and the greater part of the labor to have fallen upon the latter. The form of a treaty was drawn, and the extent to which the policy of alliance was to be carried, was substantially defined by him. This is a point very material to a right comprehension of his later career in the foreign service of his country.

This form was, after consultation with Dr. Franklin, reported to congress on the 18th of July. It was composed of articles purely commercial in their nature, and contemplated no connection beyond a reciprocation of the benefits of trade, and a mutual assurance of protection against the annoyances likely to interrupt it. Further than this, Mr. Adams was not disposed to involve the country in any engagement. It is interesting to observe, by a confidential dispatch of Count de Vergennes, after the proposal had been submitted to him, how great was his surprise at its moderation, and how accurately he penetrated the motives at the bottom of it. But some of the members, with whom Mr. Adams was habitually acting, feared that it would not present inducements enough to tempt France to swerve from her neutrality. The subject was earnestly debated

on the 27th of August, and sundry amendments adopted, which were referred to the same committee, enlarged by the addition of Richard Henry Lee and James Wilson, with directions to embody them in the shape of instructions for the government of the individual who should be intrusted with the duty of opening negotiations. Two days later, power was given to frame further instructions. Soon afterwards, Mr. Adams was called away to the duty of waiting upon Lord Howe, and he did not return until the committee had reported. It is fair, then, to assume that the instructions did not have the same origin with the treaty, although they can scarcely be said to contravene its spirit. They only betrayed the anxiety of congress to let no precise form of stipulations stand in the way of an alliance; an anxiety that ultimately led to the negotiation of a treaty on a different principle from that now reported, and one which, twenty years later, helped to bring on that complication of affairs with France, which proved the most serious cause of embarrassment that happened to the government, whilst it had Mr. Adams for its head.

The Declaration of Independence had changed the nature of the divisions in congress. Up to that moment, they had been formed upon the single point of reconciliation; one side pressing for a decree of final separation, reversible only by the armed hand, the other still anxious to leave open some avenues by which a return to kindlier feelings in Great Britain might, with honor to both parties, save the resort to force. That question once settled, a few, who yet remained dissatisfied, retired from public action. The rest embarked with more or less cheerfulness upon the hazardous voyage, sharing its perils, its disasters, and its successes, to the end. But although the original grounds of difference had been thus removed, the past had not been without its effect in marking the affinities of individuals. The general outlines of parties soon made themselves visible in the new discussions which arose. The Lees and the Adamses, Virginia and New England, though not without individual exceptions, reinforced by Pennsylvania, Delaware, and scattering members of other States, held the undisputed lead, though an opposition yet existed from New York, combined with many representatives of the Southern States. These distinctions acquired, in time, more consistency, by connecting

themselves with the position, prejudices, and passions of the military officers, in their various commands, and with the influences gradually brought to bear from beyond sea. They wound themselves around the movements of the commander-in-chief, and they seriously impaired the efficiency of the negotiations with foreign powers. This is a subject which has not yet been fully analyzed. And inasmuch as it involves a correct apprehension of all later party divisions down to the present day, it would seem to deserve an extended consideration. The task is appropriate to this biography only so far as it affected the fortunes of its subject. To that extent, which is not a small one, it may naturally be assumed.

The Revolution found the States homogeneous in language, religion, and origin, but greatly differing in habits of thought, in manners, and feelings. Their social forms, their sectarian views of religion, and their ideas on government, though all bearing the general character impressed upon them by the superior influence of the mother country, yet equally drew the differences between them from the same source. In Virginia, and in New England, the population had been the most exclusively derived from Great Britain; but it had come from very opposite classes of its society. The one had emigrated during a period, when the passions both in church and state had been stimulated to the utmost. They cherished the extreme ideas of the extreme reformers, as little idolaters of the crown as of the hierarchy. The other had borne the impress of the cavalier, holding his loyalty as a sentiment rather than a principle, revering the authority of the church, and the established order of ranks in the state, though never surrendering that spirit of personal independence which yet characterizes the higher classes of the mother country. Between these two communities, which combined to form the main body of resistance, were interposed the proprietary governments, composed of more miscellaneous materials, and, therefore, marked by less unity of character. One feature was common to these, however, and that was the monopoly in few hands of extensive landed property, which vested estates in the original grantees or their successors that affected the whole structure of society. Out of this grew distinctions between the proprietaries and the immigrating poor of different European nations, which savored more of aristoc-

racy than is usual in communities of comparatively late date. Hence it happened that public sentiment, which is in every part of the world formed out of the feelings and interests of the preponderating class, had shaped for itself a system peculiar to the circumstances of each. However opposite in other respects, the leading men concurred in this, that they sympathized far more with the Cavalier tendencies of their southern neighbors than with the Roundhead equalization of Puritan New England. So strong was this tendency at the commencement of the difficulties, that even the predominating indignation with the common oppressors in Great Britain, and the natural enthusiasm awakened by the advocacy of the common liberties, were not quite sufficient to overcome the prejudices, and allay the suspicions entertained of the motives of the Massachusetts men. This made itself visible at the very opening of the first congress; nor would the feeling have been softened, had it not been for the sagacity of the latter in covering their action with the shield of Virginia names. By this process it happened, that whilst Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington were on their side types of the same spirit which animated the barons in their victory over King John, Hancock, the Adamses, and Sherman, were equally sustaining the relation of Lenthal, Pym, and St. John towards Charles the First. It was the accordance of these forms of opinion in working for one object prized equally by both, personal and political freedom to America, which finally carried the continent in the same direction. But this union could not take place without much friction in all minor details, neither did it outlast the hour of victory. The first jar in the movement made itself felt in the organization of the military force, as will be here explained.

The news of the attack upon Lexington and Concord had not become diffused over the agricultural region of New England, before the great mass of its active men flew to arms. Some of them had served in the wars with the French, many had had a turn of militia-schooling, and all were familiar with the use of the musket. As a consequence, there clustered around the scene of hostilities at Boston, perhaps twenty thousand men, composing no army in the technical sense of the word, but yet a body of farmers, mechanics, seamen, and

laborers, with their guns, and powder-horns, and shot-bags, the companions of their occasional pursuit of game, among whom General Gage could scarcely venture to trust his small force with much prospect of ever seeing it return. These men understood little of the distinction of ranks. They had learned service in border wars with Indians, or the hardy life of the forest and the sea. They recognized little authority but what was self-imposed at the moment. Their officers were of their own choosing, and from among their own companions; obeyed in cases of obvious necessity, but not to the implicit subjection of their personal liberty, which they prized above all things. Even what organization there was, sprung from so many different sources as to defy reduction to system. Acute, discriminating, shrewd, not always scrupulous or direct in the use of means, possessing an unimpassioned tenacity of purpose in the attainment of any object, whether good or bad, and withal a little addicted to money for its own sake, the assembled multitude manifested as well the virtues as the vices of their national character. Impatient of the authority of leaders, whom they scanned too narrowly not to understand their defects and to play upon them, any attempt, on their part, to convert them into an army of regulars like those of the old world, would have been attended by but one result, their early dispersion.

Aware of this, the Massachusetts delegates in congress finally accepted the hazardous expedient of calling an utter stranger to take the chief command under the general authority of the continent. The inducements to this course were not merely the high personal reputation which he enjoyed, but the confidence that, in his person, Virginia and the other colonies were pledging themselves to maintain the cause of New England as their own. The advent of General Washington, and of the train of officers he brought with him, was the infusion of a wholly new element into the military circle. It made itself immediately felt in the undertaking to mould the motley assemblage into one army. The mass melted in the process, like snow before the sun. And all the officers, who came from abroad, not excepting even the commander-in-chief, received shocks to their feelings, and formed impressions, which time confirmed into prejudices, that had a material influence upon the train of subsequent events. This is clearly perceptible in

the whole tenor of the correspondence of the time. The mutual repulsion became much more fixed in the course of the defeats experienced at New York, and the calamities of the expedition to Canada; and from the camp it spread into the councils of the Union. The northern troops gradually imbibed so great an aversion to General Schuyler, that the New England delegates, in order to get round the difficulty, exerted themselves to substitute General Gates, a more acceptable leader. Gates's successes in the north soon concentrated around him the elements of discontent with the commander-in-chief. And these became, in time, identified with those members of congress, who had either been the active promoters of his rise, or whose confidence in the military capacity of Washington had become shaken by his defeats. On the other hand, the impressions received by the numerous officers who clustered around Washington, of the ill-will borne by the same men to him, gained strength from the alleged hesitation of Samuel and John Adams, and others of their friends, to confer almost dictatorial authority on him, not less than from the rumors set afloat that they favored none but annual enlistments. Thus it fell out, in course of time, that the line became very marked, both in congress and the army, between the friends of General Washington and those who were considered averse to him. After the success of Gates in the north, whom the latter class had succeeded in placing in command there, these became known as his partisans. Although this distinction had not obtained at the moment of Mr. Adams's retirement from service in congress, and though it is certain that his feelings were never enlisted either way, yet as his affinities in congress had always been with those who favored Gates, he was associated, in the minds of many in and out of the army, with that class. Among the young persons who received this impression was Alexander Hamilton, just commencing his career, already a decided friend of Schuyler, whose daughter he afterwards married, and equally determined against Gates. This siding had no consequences at the time. But its effects became perceptible a quarter of a century later, in a manner that will be explained as this narrative proceeds.

But the differences, which at one moment threatened the most painful consequences from this state of things, lost all their im-

mediate importance from the failure of Gates to sustain in the south the reputation he had gained in the north, as well as from the exposure of the intrigues of several of the military adventurers who had come out from France to advance their fortunes in America. The line of division, however, continued in congress, which other influences soon helped to render more and more permanent. As a general thing, those who had been most in advance in the popular movement of independence, formed the nucleus of one set of opinions, whilst those who had held back, became component parts of the other. The former naturally feared, the latter as naturally inclined to repose great power in the military chief. Had no other circumstances occurred, this alone would have given shape to parties; but there were others, and very material ones, which came from beyond the water.

The foreign policy of the new country soon infused elements of discord, which mingled with and gave color to the current of events. Quite early in the difficulties, intimations had been very guardedly given to leading Americans, through persons in communication with, though not avowed agents of the French government, that aid would be afforded, provided that proper channels could be secured to elude observation. For the sake of opening these, the secret committee, heretofore mentioned, had been raised in 1775. This committee, composed in great part of the most conservative class, had manifested but little energy in the execution of their labors. The chief result to which they came was the institution of an agency, which they conferred upon Silas Deane, with authority to go first to the French West Indies and thence to France, and, if he found it practicable, to open the desired avenues of communication between the countries. Deane was directed to solicit aid from the government of France, and from individuals, as well as to sound the disposition of the former to enter into relations, commercial or political, with the colonies. Whilst this operation was contriving on one side, Dr. Arthur Lee, who had been for some years known in London as an active friend of America, very indiscreetly transmitted to Dr. Franklin papers purporting to be anonymously addressed to a royalist, Lieutenant-Governor Colden, but actually written by himself with the intent to inspire distrust in the fidelity of a portion of the

secret committee. Messrs. Dickinson and Jay were designated as leaning too much to Great Britain, and it was explicitly declared that nothing but the substitution of men like the Adamses and Lees, known to be identified with the whole process of resistance to the crown, would avail to unlock the bosoms of sympathizers on that side of the ocean.[1] Though Dr. Lee added a special injunction that these papers should be shown only to his brother, Richard Henry, the substance of them, nevertheless, leaked out, which, coming upon earlier difficulties between the parties, accumulated causes of dissension in congress. The first occasion upon which they produced sensible effects, happened upon the nomination of three commissioners to go to France. Dr. Franklin was chosen, of course; Mr. Jefferson was next elected, and not until he declined could Dr. Lee come in. For the third place, Samuel Adams, Richard Henry Lee, and Gerry had earnestly pressed upon John Adams to accept a nomination; but as he refused to listen to the proposal, the lot fell, out of that connection, upon Silas Deane, even though he had already lost the confidence of his own State of Connecticut. At the instance of those who sympathized with Lee, however, the policy was adopted of extending applications to other European powers, in consequence of which William Lee and Ralph Izard were added as agents to go to Holland, to Prussia, and to Italy. Thus it happened that each side alternately prevailed, and the seeds were freely sown of other differences, which, in no long time, fructified abundantly on both sides of the ocean.

But out of all the diplomatic appointments, made by this remarkable assembly from among men wholly new and untrained in the arts of this peculiar profession, it is a singular fact that only that of Silas Deane proved discreditable to their choice. And even this error can scarcely be said to have originated with them. It was rather the adoption of a prior act of the secret committee, not improbably wrung from them by personal address and over-solicitation. In truth, the duties with which Deane had been charged were of the most delicate

[1] The sentence expressing this opinion, and the injunction of secrecy upon Franklin, do not appear in the papers as printed in the *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Revolution*, vol. ii. p. 7. They are found in Force's *American Archives*, 4th series, vol. iv. pp. 1125–1126.

and difficult nature, requiring a combination of talents seldom to be met with in one man. They called for knowledge, capacity, and address, with sagacity in penetrating the motives of others, as well as moral elevation in his own. Mr. Deane had little or nothing of all this. With some mercantile information, and a readiness, by many denominated practical talent, he united that species of dexterity, not uncommon in the political affairs of America, which is often mistaken for statesmanship, although it seldom deserves to be so much honored. This had brought him into notice in Connecticut, through his success in procuring his own election as a delegate to the first congress. It likewise secured him sufficient reputation, while he remained a member, to fortify his claim to a post which no more capable person was found eager to contest. He went to France, and immediately entered upon a scene wholly novel to him, with the brilliancy of which he seems to have been early dazzled. Adventurers of all sorts crowded around him, ready to offer their valuable services to the great cause of liberty at a much higher price than they could get by remaining to serve despotism at home. Shrewd traders offered to enter into lucrative contracts to any amount with him. Enthusiastic projectors were at his feet, with plans, for an adequate consideration, to build up a great State in America by the shortest possible process in the safest possible way. Exalted by finding himself in such vogue, too vain to be aware of the thorough analysis which was making of his own character among the trained agents of the power to which he had been sent, and wholly unequal to threading the mazes of the crafty and corrupt society around him, he seems to have resigned himself to the enjoyments put in his way; enjoyments, too, which he could more readily obtain, the more he would exercise of the powers supposed to be vested in him. As an inevitable consequence, he plunged into contracts, and authorized agencies, with little regard to the extent to which he embarrassed his principals, and precipitated upon them a set of turbulent and rapacious foreign officers, whose demands to outrank natives gave rise to some of the most grave and perplexing difficulties of the war.

Neither was this the worst of the troubles he occasioned. When joined in the commission with his two colleagues, by

paying court to Dr. Franklin, as the natural centre of a greater influence, and neglecting Arthur Lee, he managed to sow discord abundantly between them. Whilst his exclusive deference, on one side, secured for him the easy sympathy of Franklin in all his plans, his inattention, on the other, roused Lee's sensitive jealousy against both his colleagues. Lee's cause was taken up by his brother William, and by Ralph Izard, who happened to be in Europe, both of them provided with commissions to other powers, which they could not yet use, whilst Deane became the centre around whom the friends of Franklin rallied. The dissensions thus begun in France were not long in spreading to America, and to the heart of congress. And here, again, the Lees and the Adamses, Virginia, New England and Pennsylvania, became ranged in opposition to New York, with many members of the Southern States. These results, however, did not appear until some time later than the period immediately under consideration. They will be more fully explained in the sequel. The reference to them is made now only to show in one view the rise and progress of parties from the date of the Declaration of Independence.

It remains in this chapter briefly to sum up the services of Mr. Adams during the sixteen months that he continued in congress. To this end it will not be necessary minutely to recapitulate from the journal the important duties committed to the board of war, over which he presided, much less the labors he performed on many other committees. It is sufficient to say, from his own account, that from four o'clock in the morning until ten at night he had not a single moment that he could call his own. So exhausting was this toil, that at one time he sent to Massachusetts an earnest request to have the service relieved by dividing it among a greater number of members, and failing in this he offered his resignation. But it was not accepted, and he obtained, instead, a leave of absence for some months during the latter part of the year 1776.

With the exception of the brilliant actions at Trenton and Princeton, there was little in the military department, while he had the superintendence of it, that was calculated to cheer his spirits. But he never despaired. The loss of New York and the retreat through Jersey excited in him more indignation than discouragement. The advance of Howe on Philadelphia, causing

the flight of the congress from that city to the borough of York, instead of depressing him, was correctly viewed as placing the British force in a position to do the least possible mischief. He took comfort in every item of favorable intelligence, and made out of every disaster an occasion for urging amendment in those particulars in which errors had become apparent. His spirit may be best gathered from his private correspondence with officers of the army, particularly with those from New England, who communicated confidentially to him their causes of complaint. In answer to a letter from General Greene, which pointed out one of these, an alleged unfair system of promotion, Mr. Adams wrote the following: —

"Philadelphia, 4 August, 1776.

"Your favor of the 14th of July is before me. I am happy to find your sentiments concerning the rewards of the army and the promotion of officers so nearly agreeable to mine. I wish the general sense here was more nearly agreeable to them. Time, I hope, will introduce a proper sense of justice in those cases where it may, for want of knowledge and experience, be wanting.

"The New England colonels, you observe, are jealous, that southern officers are treated with more attention than they, because several of the southern colonels have been made generals, but not one of them.

"Thompson was, somehow or other, the first colonel upon the establishment, and so entitled to promotion by succession, and it was also supposed, by ability and merit. This ought not, therefore, to give offence. Mercer, Lewis, Howe, Moore were veteran officers, and stood in the light of Putnam, Thomas, Frye, Whitcomb, &c., among the New England officers. Added to this, we have endeavored to give colonies general officers in some proportion to their troops; and colonies have nice feelings about rank, as well as colonels. So that I do not think our colonels have just cause to complain of these promotions.

"Lord Stirling was a person so distinguished by fortune, family, and the rank and employments he had held in civil life, added to his experience in military life, that it was thought no great uneasiness would be occasioned by his advancement. Mifflin was a gentleman of family and fortune in his country,

of the best education and abilities, of great knowledge of the world, and remarkable activity. Besides this, the rank he had held as a member of the legislature of this province, and a member of congress, and his great merit in the civil department in subduing the Quaker and proprietarian interests, added to the Tory interests of this province, to the American system of union, and, especially, his activity and success in infusing into this province a martial spirit and ambition, which it never felt before, were thought sufficient causes for his advancement.

"Besides all this, my dear Sir, there is a political motive. Military characters in the southern colonies are few. They have never known much of war, and it is not easy to make a people warlike who have never been so. All the encouragement and every incentive, therefore, which can be given with justice, ought to be given, in order to excite an ambition among them for military honors.

"But, after all, my dear Sir, I wish I could have a few hours free conversation with you upon this important subject. A general officer ought to be a gentleman of letters and general knowledge, a man of address and knowledge of the world. He should carry with him authority and command. There are among the New England officers gentlemen who are equal to all this; Parsons, Hitchcock, Varnum, and others younger than they, and inferior to them too in command; but these are a great way down in the list of colonels, and to promote them over the heads of so many veterans would throw all into confusion. Reed, Nixon, and Prescott are the oldest colonels. They are allowed to be experienced officers and brave men; but I believe there is not one member of congress who knows the face of either of them; and what their accomplishments are, I know not. I really wish you would give me your advice freely upon these subjects, in confidence. It is not every piece of wood that will do to make a Mercury; and bravery alone is not a sufficient qualification for a general officer. Name me a New England colonel, of whose real qualifications I can speak with confidence, who is entitled to promotion by succession, and if I do not get him made a general officer, I will join the New England colonels in their jealousy, and outclamor the loudest of them. There is a real difficulty attending this subject, which I know not how to get over. Pray help me. I

believe there would be no difficulty in obtaining advancement for some of the New England colonels here. But by promoting them over the heads of so many, there would be a difficulty in the army. Poor Massachusetts will fare the worst."

The letter of General Green, to which this is a reply, contains a sentence, not without its meaning, as addressed to Mr. Adams at this time. Alluding to the arrival of the Howes, he says:—

"I wrote you, some time past, I thought you were playing a desperate game. I still think so."

Such was never the opinion of Mr. Adams. But the sentence seems to have had its effect in preparing him for the defeats that followed. On the 17th of August he wrote to James Warren of his wish to be relieved.

"I must entreat you to embrace the earliest opportunity after the General Court shall assemble, to elect some new members to attend here; at least, one to attend instead of me. As to others, they will follow their own inclinations. If it had not been for the critical state of things, I should have been at Boston ere now. But a battle being expected at New York, as it is every day, and has been for some time, I thought it would not be well to leave my station here. Indeed, if the decision should be unfortunate for America, it will be absolutely necessary for a congress to be sitting, and perhaps I may be as well calculated to sustain such a shock as some others. It will be necessary to have some persons here who will not be seized with an ague-fit upon the occasion."

He goes on to complain of omissions on the part of Massachusetts:—

"Our province have neglected some particular measures, apparently of small moment, which are really important. One, in particular, let me mention at present. You should have numbered your regiments, and arranged all your officers according to their rank, and transmitted the accounts to congress, at least to your delegates here. I assure you I have suffered much for want of this information. Besides, this has a great effect upon the public. The five and twentieth regiment from the commonwealth of Massachusetts Bay would make a sound. New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, &c., are very sensible of this. They have taken this political precaution, and

they have found its advantage. It has a good effect, too, upon officers. It makes them think themselves men of consequence. It excites their ambition, and makes them stand upon their honor.

"Another subject, of great importance, we ought to have been informed of. I mean your navy. We ought to have known the number of your armed vessels, their tonnage, their number of guns, weight of metal, number of men, officers' names, ranks and characters. In short, you should have given us your complete army and navy lists. Besides this, one would have thought we should have been informed, by some means or other, of the privateers fitted out in your State, their size, tonnage, guns, men, officers' names and character. But in all these respects I declare myself as ignorant as the Duke of Choiseul, and, I suspect, much more so.

"Our people have a curious way of telling a story. 'The continental cruisers, Hancock and Franklin, took a noble prize.' Ay! but who knows any thing about the said cruisers? How large are they? How many guns? Six, nine, twelve, eighteen, or twenty-four pounders? How many men? Who was the commander? These questions are asked me so often, that I am ashamed to repeat my answer: I do not know; I cannot tell; I have not heard; our province have never informed me. The reputation of the province, the character of your officers, and the real interests of both suffer inexpressibly by this inaccuracy and negligence. Look into Colonel Campbell's letter. With what precision he states every particular of his own force, of the force of his adversary, and how exact is his narration of circumstances, step by step! When shall we acquire equal wisdom? We must take more pains to get men of thorough education and accomplishment into every department, civil, military, and naval."

The news of the action of the 15th of September, at New York, came, with censures, long and loud, cast upon two New England regiments for delinquency. They roused Mr. Adams much. On the 26th, he wrote to William Tudor, who was then serving on the spot, the following letter: —

"The picture you draw of the army, and the disorders which

prevail in it, is shocking, but I believe it is just. But we often find in the variegated scene of human life that much good grows out of great evil. A few disgraces and defeats have done more towards convincing the congress than the rhetoric of many months, assisted by frequent letters from the General and many other officers of the army, was able to effect. Before this time you have been informed that the articles of war are passed and printed, and a new plan for the formation of a permanent and regular army is adopted. I wish it may have success. Pray, give me your opinion of it.

"The late events at New York have almost overcome my utmost patience. I can bear the conflagration of towns, any, almost any thing else, public or private, better than disgrace. The cowardice of New England men is an unexpected discovery to me, and, I confess, has put my philosophy to the trial. If I had heard that Parsons's and Fellows's brigades had been cut to pieces, and had my father, my brother, and my son been among the slain, I sincerely believe, upon a cool examination of my own heart, it would not have given me so much grief as the shameful flight of the 15th instant. I hope that God will forgive the guilty in the next world; but should any question concerning this transaction come into any place where I have a voice, I should think it my duty to be inexorable in this. We have none of the particulars; but I conclude that such detestable behavior of whole brigades could not have happened without the worst examples in some officers of rank. These, if any such there are, shall never want my voice for sending them to another world. If the best friend I have should prove to be one of them, I should think myself guilty of his crime, and that I deserved his punishment, if I interposed one word between him and death.

"I lament the fall of the young hero, Henley, but I wish you had been more particular in your narration of the enterprise which proved so glorious and so fatal to him. You are much mistaken in your apprehension that we are minutely informed of such events. We suffer great anxiety, and the public suffer many misfortunes, for want of information. The post-office, which has been in fault, is now beginning to do its duty. Don't you neglect yours."

In the following letter to Henry Knox, he manifests some

soreness under the representations of the commander-in-chief, which bore severely, though not undeservedly, upon the delinquent troops. Knox had expressed the opinion that the American forces had been saved by the sluggishness of the British general.

"I agree with you that there is nothing of the vast in the characters of the enemy's general or admiral. But I differ in opinion from you when you think that if there had been, they would have annihilated your army. It is very true that a silly panic has been spread in your army, and from thence even to Philadelphia. But Hannibal spread as great a panic once at Rome, without daring to attempt to take advantage of it. If he had, his own army would have been annihilated, and he knew it. A panic in an army, when pushed to desperation, becomes heroism.

"However, I despise that panic, and those who have been infected with it; and I could almost consent that the good old Roman fashion of decimation should be introduced. The legion which ran away had the name of every man in it put into a box, and then drawn out, and every tenth man was put to death. The terror of this uncertainty whose lot it would be to die, restrained the whole in the time of danger from indulging their fears.

"Pray tell me, Colonel Knox, does every man to the southward of Hudson's River behave like a hero, and every man to the northward of it like a poltroon, or not? The rumors, reports, and letters which come here upon every occasion represent the New England troops as cowards running away perpetually, and the southern troops as standing bravely. I wish I could know whether it is true. I want to know for the government of my own conduct; because, if the New England men are a pack of cowards, I would resign my place in congress, where I should not choose to represent poltroons, and remove to some southern colony, where I could enjoy the society of heroes, and have a chance of learning some time or other to be part of a hero myself. I must say that your amiable General gives too much occasion for these reports by his letters, in which he often mentions things to the disadvantage of some part of New England, but seldom any thing of the kind about any other part of the continent.

"You complain of the popular plan of raising the new army. But if you make the plan as unpopular as you please, you will not mend the matter. If you leave the appointment of officers to the General or to the congress, it will not be so well done as if left to the assemblies. The true cause of the want of good officers in the army is not because the appointment is left to the assemblies, but because such officers in sufficient numbers are not in America. Without materials; the best workman can do nothing. Time, study, and experience alone must make a sufficient number of able officers.

"I wish we had a military academy, and should be obliged to you for a plan of such an institution. The expense would be a trifle — no object at all with me."

To this letter is appended the following postscript, which shows that Mr. Adams, in 1776, was the first mover in the measure, which more than twenty years later, under his administration, it fell to his share to carry into effective execution.

"October 1.

"This day I had the honor of making a motion for the appointment of a committee to consider of a plan for the establishment of a military academy in the army. The committee was appointed, and your servant was one. Write me your sentiments upon the subject."

Worn out with constant labors in his department and in congress, after the adoption of the measures to reorganize the army, which were the most urgent, Mr. Adams, availing himself of his leave of absence for the rest of the year, on the 13th of the same month mounted his horse and returned home. During this interval from his duties, the events at Trenton and Princeton happened, to give breathing time to the hard pressed and almost despairing American troops. Congress conferred powers almost dictatorial upon General Washington, and removed to Baltimore, whither Mr. Adams directed his steps on the 9th of January, 1777. Again he was on horseback, winding his way through Connecticut to Fishkill, finding, as he said, not one half of the discontent nor of the terror among the people that he left in the Massachusetts. From thence he rode up to

Poughkeepsie, and crossing the river on the ice, followed its course on the west side down to New Windsor, five miles below Newburgh. From this place he crossed the country to Easton, in Pennsylvania, passing through Sussex county, the stronghold of the Tories in New Jersey. Of this he wrote to his wife as follows: "We met with no molestation nor insult. We stopped at some of the most noted Tory houses, and were treated everywhere with the utmost respect. Upon the strictest inquiry I could make, I was assured that a great majority of the inhabitants are stanch Whigs. Sussex, they say, can take care of Sussex. And yet all agree that there are more Tories in that county than in any other. If the British army should get into that county in sufficient numbers to protect the Tories, there is no doubt to be made they would be insolent enough, and malicious and revengeful. But there is no danger at present, and will be none, until that event takes place. The weather has been sometimes bitterly cold, sometimes warm, sometimes rainy, and sometimes snowy, and the roads abominably hard and rough, so that this journey has been the most tedious I ever attempted."

This roundabout journey to Baltimore took just three weeks to accomplish. He arrived on the evening of the 1st of February, and on the 3d wrote to James Warren the gratifying intelligence that New England was once more in high estimation. "Our troops have behaved nobly, and turned the fortune of the war. Pray let us keep our credit, as I am sure we can."

The provincial congress of Massachusetts had regularly rechosen Mr. Adams every year a delegate to the federal assembly, notwithstanding the fact that he continued to hold the commission of chief justice of the superior court. That court had now become so well established, through the character of its judges, as no longer to need extraneous aid to its authority. He therefore decided upon resigning his place in it, and to apply himself once more to the routine of the war office, and other congressional duty. Very naturally, he resumed his private correspondence with the New England officers, in which he dealt with them in his usual frank and decided way. To John Sullivan, he wrote, on the 22d of February, as follows: —

"I had this evening the pleasure of your favor of the 14th,

and a great pleasure it was; as it was an evidence that my old friends were beginning to recollect me. I have been so long absent that I seemed to have lost all my correspondents in the army. It would be at all times an obligation upon me to hear of the motions of the armies, and of our prosperous or adverse situations, of our good or ill success.

"The account you give of the good behavior of our countrymen is very pleasing to me, but it is equally so to hear of the good behavior of the troops of any other State in the Union. It is good behavior that I wish to hear of; and it is quite immaterial to me where the officer or man was born, or where he lives, provided he behaves ill. The sordid prejudices, which are carefully fomented, and the malicious slanders which are industriously propagated, I both despise and detest, if contempt and hatred can exist together.

"In truth, my old friend, I wish to hear, more than I do, of the vigilance, activity, enterprise, and valor of some of our New England generals, as well as others. What is the army at Providence about? What is become of the army at Peekskill or on the White Plains? What numbers have they? Are we to go on forever in this way, maintaining vast armies in idleness, and losing the fairest opportunity that ever offered, of destroying an enemy completely in our power? We have no returns of any army. We know not what force is on foot anywhere. Yet we have reason to believe that our constituents are paying for a very great force.

"Posterity will never blame the men. They will lay all their censures upon the general officers. All history has done so; and future historians will do the same. The general officers, if they understand themselves, and have a suitable code of military laws, will make a good army, if you give them human nature only to work upon. It behoves you all, then, to look out. I do not mean this as a censure, but as a stimulus. I hope to hear from you often; and wishing you as many laurels as you please, I remain your friend."

General Green continued to write as he had done the year before. He repeated his conviction that the game was desperate, though this would make no difference in his resolution to see it out. He likewise alluded to the low opinion of the

military officers, understood to be entertained by Mr. Adams, in a manner which led to the following long and bold letter: —

"I am not yet entirely convinced that we are playing a desperate game, though I must confess that my feelings are somewhat less sanguine than they were last June. This diminution of confidence is owing to disappointment. I then expected that the enemy would have seen two or three Bunker Hills between the point of Long Island and the banks of the Delaware River. Two or three such actions would have answered my purpose. Perhaps one alone.

"I have derived consolation, however, from these disappointments, because the people have discovered a patience under them greater than might have been expected. It was not very surprising to me that our troops should fly in certain situations, and abandon lines of such extent, at the sudden appearance of a formidable enemy in unexpected places, because I had learned from Marshal Saxe and from others that such behavior was not only common, but almost constant, among the best regular troops. But there was reason to apprehend that the people would be seized with such a panic upon such a series of ill success, that in the fright and confusion whole States would have revolted, instead of a few paltry individuals; whereas every State has stood firm, and even the most confused and wavering of them have gained strength and improved in order under all this adversity. I therefore do not yet despair.

"You say you 'are sensible I have not the most exalted opinion of our generals.' From this expression I suspect that some busybody has been endeavoring to do mischief by misrepresentation. Be this as it may, I am generally so well satisfied in my own opinions as to avow them.

"I do not expect to see characters, either among the statesmen or the soldiers of a young and tender State like ours, equal to some who were bred to the contemplation of great objects from their childhood in older and more powerful nations. Our education, our travel, our experience have not been equal to the production of such characters, whatever our genius may be, which I have no reason to suspect to be less than that of any nation under the sun. I do not expect to see an Epaminondas, to be sure; because, in the opinion of Dr. Swift, all the ages of

the world have produced but six such characters, which makes the chances much against our seeing any such. When such shall appear, I shall certainly have an exalted opinion.

"Notwithstanding this, I have a sincere esteem of our general officers, taken together as a body; and believe them, upon the whole, the best men for the purpose that America affords. I think them gentlemen of as good sense, education, morals, taste, and spirit as any we can find; and if this opinion of them is not exalted enough, I am sorry for it, but cannot help it. I hope, however, that my opinion, as well as that of the world in general, will be somewhat more sublimated before next winter. I do assure you, that two or three Bunker Hill battles, although they might be as unsuccessful as that was, would do it. I lament the inexperience of all of them, and I am sure they have all reason to lament mine. But not to disguise my sentiments at all, there are some of them, particularly from New England, that I begin to think quite unequal to the high command they hold.

"It is very true that 'success generally marks the man of wisdom,' and, in some instances, injustice is done to unsuccessful merit. But still, it is generally true that success is a mark of wisdom, and that misfortunes are owing to misconduct. The sense of mankind has uniformly supported this opinion, and therefore I cannot but think it just. The same sense has uniformly attributed the ill success of armies to the incapacity or other imperfections of the general officers, a truth which I have sometimes presumed to hint to some of our general officers, with whom I could make so free. There seems to be justice in this, because the glory of successful wars is as uniformly attributed to them.

"I shall join with you very cheerfully in 'burying past errors,' and in wishing to 'concert and execute the most effectual measures to free America from her cruel oppressors.'

"You ask why General Lee is denied his request.[1] You

[1] General Charles Lee, after he was taken prisoner, through Richard Henry Lee and his brother Francis, then in congress, made a request to that body that two or three gentlemen should be sent to New York to confer with him "on matters deeply interesting to him, and full as much to the public." This application was made with the knowledge and consent of the brothers Howe. Congress declined to grant the request, for the reasons stated above. Charles Lee's letter and Richard Henry's reply are to be found in Lee's *Memoir of R. H. Lee*, vol. i. pp. 180, 181.

ask, Can any injury arise? Will it reflect any dishonor upon congress? I do not know that it would reflect any dishonor, nor was it refused upon that principle. But congress was of opinion that great injuries would arise. It would take up too much time to recapitulate all the arguments which were used upon occasion of his letter. But congress was never more unanimous than upon that question. Nobody, I believe, would have objected against a conference concerning his private affairs or his particular case. But it was inconceivable that a conference should be necessary upon such subjects. Any thing relative to these might have been conveyed by letter. But it appears to be an artful stratagem of the two grateful brothers to hold up to the public view the phantom of a negotiation, in order to give spirits and courage to the Tories, to distract and divide the Whigs at a critical moment, when the utmost exertions are necessary to draw together an army. They meant, further, to amuse opposition in England, and to amuse foreign nations by this manœuvre, as well as the Whigs in America, and I confess it is not without indignation that I see such a man as Lee suffer himself to be duped by their policy so far as to become the instrument of it, as Sullivan was upon a former occasion. The words of the Count La Tour, upon a similar occasion, ought to be adopted by us.[1] 'Remember that now there is room neither for repentance nor for pardon. We must no longer reason nor deliberate. We only want concord and steadiness. The lot is cast. If we prove victorious, we shall be a just, free, and sovereign people. If we are conquered, we shall be traitors, perjured persons, and rebels.'

"But further. We see what use government and the two houses make of the former conference with Lord Howe. What a storm in England they are endeavoring to raise against us from that circumstance.

"But another thing. We have undoubted intelligence from

[1] "The princes of the union were not diligent enough in preparing for war. They suffered themselves to be amused with proposals of accommodation. They gave the League time to bring together great forces, and, after that, they could no longer brave it. They committed the fault, which is very common in civil wars, namely, that people endeavor to save appearances. If a party would save appearances, they must lie quiet; but if they will not lie quiet, they must push things to an extremity, without keeping any measures. It rarely happens but that otherwise they are at once both criminal and unfortunate."

Bayle's *Life of Gustavus Adolphus.*

Europe that the ambassadors and other instruments of the British ministry at foreign courts made the worst use of the former conference. That conference did us a great and essential injury at the French court, you may depend upon it. Lord Howe knows it, and wishes to repeat it.

"Congress is under no concern about any use that the disaffected can make of this refusal. They would have made the worst use of a conference. As to any terms of peace, look into the speech to both Houses, the answers of both Houses. Look into the proclamations. It is needless to enumerate particulars which prove that the Howes have no power but to murder or disgrace us.

"The retaliation that is to be practised on Lee's account, was determined on when I was absent, so that I can give no account of the reasons for that measure. Yet I have no doubt of the right; and as to the disagreeable consequences you mention, these, I hope and presume, will not take place. If they do, they will be wholly chargeable on the enemy. The end of retaliation is to prevent a repetition of the injury. A threat of retaliation is to prevent an injury, and it seldom fails of its design. In Lee's case, I am confident, it will secure him good treatment. If Lee's confinement is not strict, that of Campbell and the Hessians ought not to be. The intention was that they should be treated exactly as Lee is.

"Our late promotions may possibly give disgust; but that cannot be avoided. This delicate point of honor, which is really one of the most putrid corruptions of absolute monarchy, I mean the honor of maintaining a rank superior to abler men, I mean the honor of preferring a single step of promotion to the service of the public, must be bridled. It is incompatible with republican principles. I hope, for my own part, that congress will elect annually all the general officers. If, in consequence of this, some great men should be obliged, at the year's end, to go home and serve their country in some other capacity, not less necessary, and better adapted to their genius, I do not think the public would be ruined. Perhaps it would be no harm. The officers of the army ought to consider that the rank, the dignity, and the rights of whole States are of more importance than this point of honor; more, indeed, than the solid glory of any particular officer. The States insist, with great justice and

sound policy, on having a share of the general officers in some proportion to the quotas of troops they are to raise. This principle has occasioned many of our late promotions, and it ought to satisfy gentlemen. But if it does not, they, as well as the public, must abide the consequences of their discontent.

"I shall at all times think myself happy to hear from you, my dear Sir, and to give the utmost attention to whatever you may suggest. I hope I shall not often trouble you to read so long a lurry of small talk."

One of the most difficult portions of the duty of the board of war was to maintain the authority of congress in the disputes which were constantly taking place among the general officers. On the 15th of March, the board reported resolutions of censure upon General Schuyler, for the tone taken by him in his letters to congress. They were adopted, and are recorded in the journal of that day. But this incident did not compare in difficulty with that created by the concerted threats of resignation made by Green, Knox, and Sullivan, all of them confidential correspondents of Mr. Adams, upon the bare rumor that Ducoudray, the French engineer, engaged, without authority, by Silas Deane in France, was about to be set over their heads. This act was the more remarkable on the part of Green, as he had, more than a month before, in a private letter to Mr. Adams, protested with great freedom against it, and had received private assurances from him that congress was in no disposition to sanction the contract. The event caused Mr. Adams great pain, as he had a strong partiality for that officer. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to address him a frank remonstrance, and to place before him at once the alternative of withdrawing his act, or of giving in his resignation. In spirit, it is so similar to the resolution which congress unanimously adopted, that there can be little doubt the latter was equally his. Congress voted: —

"That the President transmit to General Washington copies of the letters from Generals Sullivan, Green, and Knox to congress, with directions to him to let those officers know that congress consider the said letters as an attempt to influence their decisions, an invasion of the liberties of the people, and indicating a want of confidence in the justice of congress; that

it is expected by congress the said officers will make proper acknowledgments for an interference of so dangerous a tendency; but if any of those officers are unwilling to serve their country under the authority of congress, they shall be at liberty to resign their commissions, and retire."

It does not appear that any of them made the apology expected. Green never answered Mr. Adams's private letter, nor did he resume the correspondence. The officers did not, however, resign their posts, and congress, in a few days, decided not to ratify Mr. Deane's engagement, so that the difficulty was removed. Considering the helpless situation of congress, it is quite surprising that they should have succeeded even so well as they did, in maintaining their influence over the army. The current of late years has been setting against them, as if they, as a body, had failed in their duty, and had consumed the time, which they should have spent in active support of the war, in maturing factious combinations against the commander-in-chief. There is no just foundation for these strictures, however they may apply to individual members. The army, although at heart patriotic, was all the time filled with personal jealousies and discontents, which nothing kept within reasonable bounds but the impassible moderation of Washington. Herein it was that he saved the country, far more than by any act of his military campaigns. Neither is it any cause of wonder or censure, that the patriots in congress, who had not yet had any decisive experience of his true qualities, should have viewed with much uneasiness the power which circumstances were accumulating in his hands. History had no lesson to prompt confidence in him, and, on the other hand, it was full of warnings. In this light, the attempt, whilst organizing another army in the north, to raise up a second chief, as a resource, in case of failure with the first, must be viewed as a measure not without much precautionary wisdom. The conception, probably, belonged to Samuel Adams, who, in the absence of his kinsman, had been added to the board of war; but it was actively promoted by both. The consequence was the removal of Schuyler, who, in spite of his useful services, had become obnoxious to New England, the establishment of General Gates in command of the army, largely composed of the New England forces summoned to resist Burgoyne, and the prosecution

of the northern campaign. This constituted one of the great labors of the summer of 1777, labors which cut off Mr. Adams from the ability to keep copies of his letters and to continue his diary, to such a degree that it is impossible here to give the evidence to show their extent.

Congress remained but a short time at Baltimore. Yet their return to Philadelphia was not destined to be permanent. Early in August Mr. Adams foresaw that they would be driven away by Howe, and prepared his wife for it in the following lively way: —

"Do not be anxious for my safety. If Howe comes here, I shall run away, I suppose, with the rest. We are too brittle ware, you know, to stand the dashing of balls and bombs. I wonder upon what principle the Roman senators refused to fly from the Gauls, and determined to sit, with their ivory staves and hoary beards, in the porticos of their houses, until the enemy entered the city, and, although they confessed they resembled the gods, put them to the sword. I should not choose to indulge this sort of dignity; but I confess myself so much injured by these barbarian Britons, that I have a strong inclination to meet them in the field. This is not revenge, I believe, but there is something sweet and delicious in the contemplation of it. There is in our hearts an indignation against wrong, that is righteous and benevolent, and he who is destitute of it, is defective in the balance of his affections, and in his moral character."

His spirit was not cast down, however, by the imminent danger. Thus he speculates, in another letter: —

"The moments are critical here. We know not but the next will bring us an account of a general engagement begun; and when once begun, we know not how it will end, for the battle is not always to the strong. The events of war are uncertain. All that we can do is to pray, as I do most devoutly, that we may be victorious, at least that we may not be vanquished. But if it should be the will of Heaven that our army should be defeated, our artillery lost, our best generals killed, and Philadelphia fall into Mr. Howe's hands, still, America is not conquered. America would yet be possessed of great resources, and capable of great exertions, as mankind would see. It may, for what I know, be the design of Providence that this should

be the case; because it would only lay the foundations of American independence deeper, and cement them stronger. It would cure Americans of their vicious, and luxurious, and effeminate appetites, passions, and habits, a more dangerous army to American liberty than Mr. Howe's."

Although the result was not quite so bad as here apprehended, it was bad enough. Before daylight of the morning of the 19th of September, news came from the commander-in-chief that the British had it in their power, if they pleased, to enter Philadelphia forthwith. Not at all unprepared for this, Mr. Adams was up betimes, mounted his horse, and in company with his friend, Marchant, a delegate from Rhode Island, arrived early that day at Trenton. Two days later they resumed their journey, passing through Easton, Bethlehem, and Reading, to Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, at which last place congress reassembled on the 27th. But finding this place not convenient, they passed on the next day to York. The course had been circuitous enough, more than doubling the direct distance between the ends of the journey, but it was attended with no annoyance from the enemy, and it enabled the members to keep an eye upon the transportation of the public papers. Arrived at York, Mr. Adams found comfortable quarters in the house of General Roberdeau, one of the Pennsylvania delegates, "an Israelite indeed," and he assured his wife that his spirit was not the worse for the loss of Philadelphia.

Yet the state of things was rather gloomy. General Howe had made his way to that city with little difficulty. The disaffection prevailing in the lower counties had become manifest, the moment it could avail itself of British protection. Washington had failed to make good his ground of defence, and there was every reason to believe that the seaboard of the Middle States must henceforth be entirely abandoned. The number of members now assembled, upon whom devolved the responsibility of continuing the struggle, had become quite small, seldom exceeding thirty, often falling as low as twenty-three. The duties to be performed by this handful were never heavier. They acted as administrative, and executive, and judicial officers, not less than as legislators. The country has retained a very feeble idea of their labors, and historians, led away by the more stirring events of the battle-field, have by no means

done justice to the intellectual and moral qualities that were giving, at this time, its shape and destiny to the systematic independence which was the object of the struggle. Mr. Adams still remained at the head of the board of war, which, by reason of the severity of its labors, had been more than once enlarged, but this did not save him from the necessity of taking his turn in other departments. A great proportion of the whole number of members were enrolled in the service of the war and treasury committees; but there was another, charged with the correspondence from abroad, which was every day growing in importance; and still another had been established to hear and decide upon appeals from the admiralty courts. Of such a committee Mr. Adams, from his professional fitness, almost unavoidably became a member, and he was ultimately made its chairman. It is no cause for surprise, then, that he should say to his wife that he was "oppressed with public cares." But he was not discouraged.

"I have long foreseen," he wrote, "that we should be brought down to a great degree of depression before the people of America would be convinced of their real danger, of the true causes of it, and be stimulated to take the necessary steps for a reformation. Government and law in the States, large taxation and strict discipline in our armies, are the only things wanting as human means. These, with the blessings of Heaven, will certainly produce glory, triumph, liberty, and safety, and peace. And nothing but these will do."

One branch of the great system, originally contemplated, yet remained incomplete. The plan of confederation, the main spring of the united movement of the States, had not been brought to any positive shape. The pressure of subjects demanding an immediate decision, had interposed delays that had been increased by the differences of opinion naturally springing out of a topic so momentous. In this way, fifteen months had been suffered to intervene, and the confederation still remained an undetermined question. Nor yet had the time been altogether lost. At intervals, the main principles at the foundation of the system had been presented for consideration, freely discussed, and permanently settled. The territorial limits of the States, their rights of representation, and liabilities to be taxed, had been the most difficult points to be harmoniously arranged.

Through all these questions Mr. Adams had taken an active and leading part in debate. Sometimes he was fortunate enough to agree with the greater number, and at others he adhered to his own judgment against that even of his immediate colleagues and friends. Although most of the final votes were taken after the adjournment to York, there is no trace left of any discussions at that place. Upon one point Mr. Adams was steady in his opposition to the last. He could not consent to the seventeenth article, which provided that the States should have an equal vote in congress without regard to their extent or population. In this he stood alone among the delegates of the States north of Virginia. He likewise stood alone in voting for a representation apportioned to population, each delegate of which should have a separate vote. Again he so stood in favor of a representation proportioned to the annual contributions of the States to the federal treasury. In the first two cases, at least, there can be little doubt at this time of the correctness of his views. No permanency could have been obtained by any plan which would forever continue the power of New York and Pennsylvania on the same level with that of Delaware and Rhode Island. Very justly did he immediately prognosticate, from this decision, the speedy failure of the whole experiment. Mr. Marchant, a delegate present, has described the occasion, and thus rescued from oblivion one of the most characteristic anecdotes that has been told of him.[1] Upon another question he stood, in conjunction with the rest of New England, in opposition to all the other members but two. That question touched the proper apportionment of the public charges. The plan proposed and adopted was to base it exclusively upon land and buildings. New England would have extended it to other property, including in the term African slaves. The other States, in which this description of population was mostly found, preferred then to exempt themselves from charge by considering them as exclusively persons. This distinction should always be kept in mind, in connection with the language of the constitution, framed eleven years afterwards.

The confederation, from its outset, was placed on a wrong basis. It was a league of States, creating a mere outward form

[1] Vol. iii. p. 70, note.

of sovereignty, with all effective powers reserved to themselves. The consequence naturally followed that the States, never having advanced to the recognition of any common system of performing obligations, gradually receded to the fulfilment of none at all. This might have been, and probably was, foreseen by some of those concerned in the construction of it. And yet they were right in thinking the experiment worth making. In the then state of opinion, there is no reason for believing that any thing better could have been obtained. The jealousies between the States were not to be overcome by any thing short of a surrender, on the part of the large ones, of their undefined claims to territory, and an organization of the ceded lands in a separate and distinct shape. These were objects which the confederated system secured, and which removed obstacles and paved the way to something better. But over and above the advantages gained from this positive action, there were others, of not less importance, drawn from the experience obtained of its negative character. The people of the thirteen States needed the conviction that such a plan would not do, before they could be persuaded to proceed to a better. This was purchased by the sacrifice of ten years, a short period in the progress of nations. And even this interval was partially improved; for at least that portion of it devoted to the war was not passed without favoring the steady growth of a national spirit and a decline of local prejudices, through the union of the common forces, raised without discrimination, and contending for a common cause.

Whilst engaged in perfecting the details of this experiment, and in the midst of the gloom caused by the misfortunes in eastern Pennsylvania, came a ray of light from the north. For nearly a week it appeared so doubtfully as to cause only painful anxiety. On the 24th of October, Mr. Adams wrote thus: —

"From last Sunday to this moment, Friday afternoon, four o'clock, we have been in a state of tormenting uncertainty concerning our affairs at the northward. On Sunday, we had news from the committee of Albany, through Governor Clinton and General Washington, of a capitulation of Burgoyne and his whole army. To this moment we have no express from Gates, nor any authentic confirmation."

The express-rider, Wilkinson, though not so expeditious as he should have been, came at last, and the news was all and

more than all that was hoped for. To Mr. Adams it was particularly grateful, inasmuch as it redeemed the reputation of the New England troops. It was clear that the work of subjugation was to begin anew. So far the congress felt that they had cause for profound congratulation. But not one of the members imagined, neither has it, until very lately, come to light, that this event made the turning-point in the struggle. It determined the wavering counsels of France to an alliance, which, in its turn, baffled Lord North's last scheme of conciliation by sending commissioners, and filled him with despair. From this date he was no more a responsible minister, although the facility of his nature led him to consent, for several years longer, to appear one. The obstinacy of the sovereign demanded a further perseverance in the war, and, merely to please him, North sacrificed his own convictions and the lives of thousands of his fellow-beings. This is the feature of the character of that minister, which should bring down upon him the most unequivocal condemnation. The conscientious statesman, who acts upon positive ideas, may, indeed, prove the cause of many misfortunes to his country from mistaking his policy, but when convinced of error, he will either frankly retrace his steps or give way to others disposed to adopt a different system. In no case will he consent to carry on the government, for a moment, upon measures, in the favorable issue of which he has lost his faith. Had Lord North been of this class, he would have insisted upon the monarch's accepting his resignation forthwith. Although the issue of such a decision might not have been immediate peace, at any rate it would have removed from his shoulders the burden of all later consequences of perseverance in a hopeless war.

But Lord North was not of the sensitive race who study responsibility in the schools. He was of those, not rare in every country, who boast of being practical statesmen; in other words, who do what is in the line of their official duty without looking before or after, without caring nicely to analyze the reasons for or against any part of the measures, which accident or power prescribes. From this time forward he consented to remain prime minister so long as the king could command a majority in parliament, although he had no belief in the ability to recover the object for which the war was first waged, and

though he foresaw that its prolongation might involve an expansion of the struggle over France and perhaps other great powers of Europe. More of the evils of public measures are chargeable to the weakness than to the wickedness of statesmen. The inability of Lord North to resist the solicitations of a monarch whose reason was even then tottering on its throne, was what upheld a policy which immediately wasted millions of the earnings of honest labor, and thousands of precious lives, in four of the most civilized and Christian countries of the globe, and the later effects of which, in embroiling the peace of nations and shaking the foundations of government itself, great as they have already proved, have as yet been but imperfectly developed.[1]

All these things were, however, to Mr. Adams as a sealed book, at the moment when he prayed for leave of absence from congress to visit his home, which he had not seen since the beginning of the year, and to look after his affairs, his children, and his business. He began, indeed, to feel as if the time had come when he might be entirely released from this scene of labor, and return to the practice of his profession, once more open to receive him. The labors to which he had at first devoted himself, were, in a degree, accomplished. Independence, the first and main object, had been declared; and the capture of Burgoyne's army had rendered the prospect of its ultimate establishment probable, if not sure. The practice of self-government had been earnestly entered upon, in accordance with his views, in many of the States, and the general bond of a confederation between them all had been at last matured, and submitted to their approval by congress. All the measures necessary to solicit alliances with foreign states had likewise been adopted, a favorable issue from which, no longer dependent upon them, was yet reasonably anticipated, at least in the case of France, from the accounts transmitted by the commissioners. Even the management of the war was assuming a more pleasing aspect. Nothing was left to do but to go on in the course marked out, and, with the smiles of Providence, a favorable issue of the adventurous experiment might be fairly

[1] The strictures of Lord Brougham, upon this behavior of Lord North, are palpably just. The significant thing is, his incidental admission that his maxims have not generally guided the action of public men in Great Britain.
Statesmen of the Reign of George the Third.

hoped for. The moment was then propitious for retreat from this scene upon which he had been acting almost without respite for nearly four years. From being one of the most feared and distrusted of the members, he had, by degrees, risen to a position of high and leading influence. From the Declaration of Independence his policy had been, undisputedly, in the ascendant. If his boldness had done much to accelerate that crisis, his never-doubting confidence had been scarcely less effective, afterwards, in sustaining the spirit of the assembly under the many and grievous discouragements of the unequal struggle. It was of him that one of its members, this year, deliberately wrote to Dr. Gordon, afterwards the historian of the war, in these words: "I never can think we shall finally fail of success while Heaven continues to the congress the life and abilities of Mr. John Adams. He is equal to the controversy in all its stages. He stood upon the shoulders of the whole congress when reconciliation was the wish of all America. He was equally conspicuous in cutting the knot which tied the colonies to Great Britain. In a word, I deliver to you the opinion of every man in the House, when I add that he possesses the clearest head and firmest heart of any man in the congress."

Thus far the union of Virginia and Massachusetts, with Pennsylvania since July, 1776, originally centred around the Lees and the Adamses, had continued, and the success of the northern army, which, in the end, caused the decline of its power, might, for the moment, be regarded as placing it at its point of culmination. Had the subject of this memoir been of those who studiously consult the dignity of historical attitude, in regulating their public career, he could not have selected a more appropriate hour to retire. But, in truth, he was not at all of this sort. His single idea in returning home, was that his term of service was fairly over, and others might now come in to take their share of the labor. To his profession, his main dependence for the future as it had been prior to the troubles, he was determined to keep open a way. His domestic attachments were altogether too strong to permit him to watch, without uneasiness, the lapse of years spent in absence and under a steady decline of his resources for the support and education of his children. It was such motives as these, that were leading him to the decision to quit congress, certainly for

a time, perhaps forever, when an event unexpectedly occurred, which, whilst it as effectually put an end to his congressional career, transferred his public service to a new scene, and a widely different and more extended range of action.

On the 11th of November, Samuel and John Adams set out from York together, on their way home. They had been steadily acting in concert, for the same objects, ever since the day of their appearance in Philadelphia, in 1774, and fortune had thus far singularly smiled on their labors. More than once, in that time, the maintenance of the policy of Massachusetts itself had depended upon them alone; and the tone of the congress had ever been, to a great extent, affected by that of Massachusetts. The two men were, in many respects, different from each other; and yet, in some, they were singularly alike. The same strength of will and earnestness of purpose; the same purity of public motive and of private life. If the one was more remarkable for the comprehensiveness of his speculation, the other excelled in the faculty of interweaving his theory with the passions and principles of those associated with him. If the one was the most powerful in debate, the other was the most persuasive in counsel. John Adams had already done his work. A longer stay in the same sphere would not have been productive of services which might not equally be rendered by a person of inferior powers. Samuel Adams still remained to infuse into the general councils the same tenacity of purpose which had marked the policy of his people from the day that he had been admitted to their confidence. Although the kinsmen were about to part, it was only the more effectively to carry out the great objects for which both had been drawn into action. Neither was it until all of them had been secured, until victory had crowned the efforts for American independence, that those diversities of temperament which mark the earlier, reappear in the later period of their career. It needed the conjoint effort of the minds and hearts of both to set the stamp of Massachusetts upon the great movement of the western hemisphere, and accordingly they were earnestly, strongly, and perseveringly combined to that end. There are many honorable pages in the annals of the commonwealth; none in which the type of her character is more shiningly illustrated than by the revolutionary services of these two of her sons.

CHAPTER VI.

Commission to France — Services in forming a Constitution for Massachusetts — Commission to negotiate Treaties with Great Britain — The Mediation of Russia and Austria — Negotiations in Holland.

The embarrassments into which congress had been thrown by the contracts of Silas Deane so incensed that body against him that they determined upon his recall, though his friends proved strong enough to prevent any record on the journal of the precise reason for the act. A few days after Mr. Adams had left York, the selection of a successor in the commission came up for decision. He was nominated by his friend and colleague, Elbridge Gerry. The votes of the States sufficiently indicate the relations of members at this time. New England with Pennsylvania, the Lees, of Virginia, and Laurens, of South Carolina, elected him, whilst New York, North Carolina, Maryland, Georgia, and one Virginian preferred Robert R. Livingston. The news of this event reached him whilst engaged in a cause before the admiralty court at Portsmouth, in New Hampshire. It came accompanied by letters, earnestly pressing his acceptance of the trust. "I am charged," said James Lovell, then a member of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, "by all those who are truly anxious here for the best prosperity of our affairs in France, to press your acceptance of the commission which has this day been voted you. The great sacrifices which you have made of private happiness have encouraged them to hope that you will not allow the consideration of your partial defect in the language to weigh any thing, when you surmount others of a different nature. Dr. Franklin's age alarms us. We want one man of inflexible integrity on the embassy." From the camp at Whitemarsh, whither Mr. Gerry had been sent on a committee, he wrote

thus: "I hope to have the concurrence of your lady when I urge the necessity of your accepting your appointment. It is the earnest wish of congress and every friend to America that you determine in the affirmative, and, of consequence, chagrin and disappointment will result from a refusal." Daniel Roberdeau, the delegate from Pennsylvania, at whose house he had lived whilst at Yorktown, penned the following lines: "I expect a cheerful acquiescence in a call so honorable, which I doubt not will prove a lasting honor to you and your connections, as well as a blessing to these States. I should be sorry for the least hesitation. I will not admit the thought of your refusal of the office, which would occasion a public chagrin."

The tone of Henry Laurens, then the President, as well as of Richard Henry Lee, was equally urgent. From all which, it may be presumed that Mr Adams had been elected under great uncertainty whether he would consent to take the post. It was not an object of general ambition, inasmuch as it involved no trifling risk of capture on the way. From a regard to this consideration, with the exception of Franklin, no individual, up to this time, had been dispatched from America with a formal diplomatic commission. Such selections as congress had made had been confined to persons, like the Lees and Mr. Izard, living in Europe at the time the troubles began. To Mr. Adams, the question presented by this proposal was of the most serious character. He had returned with the purpose of resuming the practice of his profession at home. The acceptance of this offer would inevitably be fatal to any such idea, as it must take him at once from the scene, and from the ability further to continue the relations with his clients, which thus far, through his various separations, he had sedulously preserved. Above all, it would remove him from his wife and his young children, at a time of peril, in a conflict of doubtful issue. Considerations not stronger than these had deterred Mr. Jefferson from accepting the same place a few months earlier. On the other hand, however, lay the opportunity to promote the system of policy to which he had pledged every thing worth living for at home, through the establishment of relations with foreign countries that might serve as buttresses of independence. And there was, besides, the ambition, natural to every great mind, to labor in an adequate field for its exercise. These considerations

fortified by the urgency of his friends, not to permit the question of a choice to be reopened, carried the day. He accepted the appointment, and forthwith made preparations for his embarkation.

Congress had directed one of the best of the few vessels at their command to be fitted out to transport him; but it was two months before she could be got ready, and, in the interval, her destination and the object of the voyage had become generally known. On a boisterous morning of the 13th of February, 1778, the frigate Boston then lying in the roadstead, Captain Samuel Tucker went in his boat to Mount Wollaston, a headland of the town of Braintree, constituting a part of the estate of Mrs. Adams's maternal uncle, Norton Quincy, at whose house Mr. Adams, attended by his eldest son, John Quincy Adams, a boy of ten years old, were ready, as agreed, to meet him. Here, after an early and a hasty meal, they embarked. Mrs. Adams, not at all daunted by the danger, had proposed to accompany him; but, after mature consideration, it was deemed best that she should not encounter, with three young children, the risks of such a voyage. The "Diary" gives a full description of all that happened; the escape, by superior sailing, from British cruisers on the watch for the frigate; the storm in the Gulf Stream, which shattered the mainmast; the encounter with a British letter-of-marque, and her capture; and, lastly, the anxieties excited in the approach to the British Channel. These events cannot now carry with them associations like those with which Mr. Adams himself, in his later days, used to narrate them. How much he must have thought of the possibility of being immured in the Tower of London, as a rebel, a fate which befell Henry Laurens at a less critical stage in the struggle, may readily be imagined. Such a misfortune was not, however, in reserve for him. He reached Bordeaux in safety, was received with honors, and immediately passed on to Paris, where he arrived on the 8th of April, 1778.

But in the interval that had occurred since the date of his appointment, things had so far changed in Europe, as materially to affect Mr. Adams's position, and to render his expedition of little utility to his country or to himself. Time, which slowly unveils the curtain from the inner springs of public action, has at last shown that the capitulation of General Burgoyne, with

the close of the northern campaign of 1777, substantially determined the struggle; and that the blood, and misery, and devastation, which marked the rest of the war, must be laid to the account of the exaggerated stubbornness of George the Third, stimulating the indomitable haughtiness of the British people. Great, indeed, are the responsibilities of men in power, not simply for their acts, but for their omissions to act, particularly when they use no effort to stem the tide of human passions that course disastrously over the surface of human affairs! France, which had for years, with an eagle-eye, watched the appearance of a fissure in the British empire, but which had been thus far deterred from intruding by the risk of being crushed by a sudden springing back of the parts, no sooner received the news, that a formidable British army had been actually expunged in America, than it snatched at the opportunity to drive home the stroke. Never was a blow so exactly timed. It fell with superadded force by reason of the popular sympathy of all civilized Europe. North, the king's dependence, cowered under it, and with his colleagues sought safety in retreat. Even the genius of Mansfield, strenuously as he had upheld the royal will, shrunk from further prominence in the contest, and begged for shelter under the robes of the man of all England whom he most bitterly detested, the still unconquered Chatham. Three years before, he had applied to the American quarrel the unsparing words of a Swedish general's address to his men: "My lads, you see those fellows yonder; if you do not kill them, they will kill you." Now, he was fain to advise the king to call in the aid of any stronger will, however obnoxious, which might avail to stop the mischief from spreading further.

But even at this moment, it was not Chatham, as he had been in the full glory of the war of 1756, wielding with his single arm the whole thunders of the British power, that he or the king wanted, but Chatham in bonds, as he had been in his latest ministry, giving his great name and greater influence to the prosecution of a policy not his own. Fortunately for that great man, a higher power interfered to save him from a second sacrifice of his fame to the pride of his sovereign and the folly of his nation. Disappointed, but not disheartened, the monarch made a new appeal to the retiring minister not to

desert him in the hour of a falling cause. Lord North felt its force, and, with the customary facility of his nature, submitted himself a passive instrument to execute his master's will. But it is now proved, beyond a doubt, that from that date he himself never anticipated any other termination of the struggle than the substantial concession of all that America had demanded.

The union between France and the United States had been sealed in February, just at the time when Mr. Adams was embarking on his voyage. It was in the form of two treaties, one a commercial agreement, the other an alliance contingent upon the breaking out of hostilities to France on the part of Britain. Neither of them precisely conformed to the plan proposed by Mr. Adams in congress, which, it will be recollected, was confined exclusively to trade, and contemplated extending the offer of free commerce to all non-belligerent nations. The amendments were apparently the suggestions of the French government. That incorporated into the treaty of commerce, which conceded that no duties should be levied on any kind of merchandise exported from the United States, by French subjects, to the French West India Islands, gave more than an equivalent to the privilege obtained of freedom from export duty on molasses brought from those islands to the United States. And although, in practice, it might have enured to the advantage of the Americans, as Mr. Deane's Connecticut shrewdness was disposed to foretell, it was, on its face, open to the objections urged both by Mr. Lee and Mr. Izard, and was at last very properly eliminated. In the treaty of alliance, the provision which guaranteed to France her possessions in America, in exchange for a guarantee of the territorial integrity of the United States, though felt as of no moment then, carried with it very grave consequences twenty years later, when the relative position of the two nations had become greatly changed. Inconsistent as it was with Mr. Adams's notions of neutrality in the future contests of Europe, he was in no humor to raise it as an objection to what was in other respects so capital a stroke. Besides, the result relieved him from a sense of further personal responsibility in his mission, and rendered his continuance in France of comparatively small consequence.

Other events very early concurred to make him feel anxious to return. Mr. Deane, who had taken upon himself the active

labors of the commission, had left every thing in the utmost disorder. And his friends, including the adventurers who had clustered around him from the day his powers to make contracts were noised abroad, under shelter of the name of Franklin and of the French court, were waging a war of criminations with Arthur and William Lee, Ralph Izard, and the other Americans in France who joined with them. The breach thus created had been much widened by the undisguised distrust entertained by Count de Vergennes of Arthur Lee's fidelity, a distrust carried to the extraordinary length of demanding the exclusion of Lee from intelligence communicated to his colleagues. That Lee and his friends should have resented this, can cause no surprise. The act was not justified by the evidence the minister had been on the watch to collect, and was submitted to by his colleagues more passively than became them as joint representatives of an independent nation. A similar, but less offensive, attempt of France, made twenty years later, roused the indignation of all America as well against the French authorities as the person unjustly suspected of yielding to their solicitations.

Mr. Adams had no disposition to cherish such animosities. Prepossessed in favor of Arthur Lee, by his associations in congress with his brothers, he, at this time, entertained no ill will to Deane, and had a high regard for Dr. Franklin. It was, therefore, his earnest desire, whilst doing his duty, to steer a neutral course. To this end he limited himself to such labors as he thought would meet the approbation of all alike, and which, very certainly, no one could censure. He strove to introduce method and rigid habits of business into the transactions of the commissioners. He assumed the task of corresponding with the various agents; of procuring a regular system of accountability, and putting a stop to several abuses that had been permitted. The letter-book of the joint commission, which was left in his hands, probably because it had been mainly his work, bears ample evidence of the extent of his industry in this calling. But his observation did not fail to bring him to a conviction, that the little he could do would be of no avail to reach the source of the evils complained of. To remedy them, radical changes would be necessary, and a new division of labor must be made by congress. He wrote letters

to Samuel Adams, to Gerry, and to others of his friends, setting forth his ideas, and strenuously urging a separation of the diplomatic from the commercial and purely pecuniary transactions in France. He further recommended that the care of each of these departments should be vested in one individual, with whom the responsibility of action should exclusively abide. This would involve the abolition of the old commission, of which he had been made a member. Dr. Franklin, as a matter of course, would be retained at Paris as sole minister, whilst the consular and other duties would call for the appointment of some new person fitted, by his character and previous life, for the faithful performance of them. These representations, coming in aid of similar ones from Dr. Franklin and others, had their effect upon congress, and the suggestions were adopted with unusual promptness. The old commission of three was annulled. Dr. Franklin was made sole minister at the court of France. Mr. Lee was dispatched to Madrid. Colonel Palfrey was, in course of time, made consul-general, with large powers to settle accounts, an admirable selection not destined by Providence to be fulfilled. But for Mr. Adams no provision was made. He was not informed even of what was expected of him, whether to wait or to return, whether to regard himself as under orders, or as left wholly to shift for himself.

The causes of this singular oversight must be found in the peculiar condition of the congress at this period. Torn to pieces by dissensions in the army, caused, in a great measure, by the foreign officers whom Silas Deane had so improvidently engaged, a new element of discord was thrown in by the return of that gentleman himself, and the consequent transfer to America of those disputes which had raged in the commission at Paris. The numbers of that assembly continued much reduced, seldom exceeding five and twenty, and these were divided into friends of Washington and advocates of Gates, supporters of Deane and allies of the Lees and Izard. Simultaneously with these distractions, the multitudinous cares and anxieties attending the prosecution of the war without legitimate resources, and the maturing of foreign alliances, pressed with increasing weight. It has been the disposition of modern writers, misled by the fault-finding tendencies of those who only saw wherein they failed, to speak of the congress of this period as degenerate. That

they who composed it were subject to the passions and infirmities of men, may readily be conceded without detracting from their merit for what they accomplished. All action must be measured by a standard formed by comparing the difficulties in which men are involved with the facilities provided to overcome them. Judging by this test, the handful of men, who struggled through the gloomy period of 1778 and 1779, with little real power, and meeting with crosses and vexations at every turn, nor yet often relieved by brilliant success to cheer them on their way, seem entitled to a much higher share of honors than is likely ever to be awarded to them. If some of them distrusted the capacity, or were fearful of the fidelity, of Washington, that might well be without in any way derogating from their purity of motive or accuracy of judgment. Washington was a new character in the military and moral world, and could be regarded, at this early stage, only by the light of ancient experience. Their representative position carried a responsibility with it, and dictated a caution, very different from any thing belonging to the foreign adventurers, who viewed the contest only as trained military soldiers of fortune. Their endeavors to establish something like a balance of power in the army may, under the precise circumstances, be conceded to have been unfortunate, though it would have required but a little different combination of characters to have earned for it to them the highest degree of credit. If the domestic difficulties were thus perplexing, those which sprang from abroad were not much less so. And, after all, the policy substantially pursued, although subject to the delays and irregularities incident to the action of all assemblies, was wise and judicious. But it cannot be wondered at, that those who suffered serious inconveniences by the want of promptness, should have been little disposed to sink the temporary annoyances to their feelings in the view of distant results, the nature of which they could not possibly understand.

Silas Deane, upon his return, found the friends of Arthur Lee in array to oppose him, and the members of congress generally provoked with him for the troubles occasioned by his contracts with Ducoudray, Deborre, Conway, and others. This had occasioned his recall. He asked to be heard in his defence, and was indulged; but the adverse testimony of Mr. Car-

michael, who had likewise returned, and now sat as a delegate from Maryland, was also heard, so that the result was to clear up nothing. Not ready to pronounce judgment at this stage, the consequence was that, in the press of other more urgent matters, Congress laid this business over. But to Mr. Deane, if he could have proved himself clear of censure, this delay was equivalent to a denial of justice. Had he been able at once to produce his vouchers and explain his proceedings, there can be little doubt that his friends would have been strong enough to procure for him an honorable discharge. But owing, perhaps, to their false delicacy, which had obtained a suppression of the true grounds of his recall, he had left Europe without being fully apprised of the nature of the complaints against him, and this he urged as his excuse for neglecting to bring his papers with him, and for asking permission to return to France to collect them. Neither was there any thing unreasonable or implying cause for suspicion in all this, if he had stopped here. But he did not; and his next step materially changed the aspect of his case. It was a bold appeal, from the tribunal to which he had thus far submitted himself, to the people of the country at large, which he printed in the columns of a newspaper. The design of this could have been no other than to bid farewell to reasoning, and to transfer the storm of party passions from the narrow theatre within which they had been thus far confined, to the wide arena of the thirteen States. No open enemy could have devised an expedient better calculated, in the midst of this war, to strike a fatal blow at the confederation. The first consequence was a reply, more strong than discreet, from the hand of Thomas Paine, then in the employ of congress, in which the secret aid received from France, whilst still professing relations of amity to England, was so distinctly betrayed, as to draw down a grave reclamation from Mr. Gérard, the minister of his most Christian majesty. The next was a violent contest in the bosom of congress itself, and the resignation of the place of presiding officer by Henry Laurens, because the majority declined to resent the appeal in a manner befitting his view of their dignity. He was succeeded by John Jay, selected because he was a delegate of New York and the type of a different policy.

In the midst of the commotions thus excited, it can scarcely be wondered at, that Mr. Adams's situation in France should have been overlooked. Especially as he had been fortunate enough to avoid being involved in the strife. His position was not, however, the less annoying to him. Idleness was ever foreign to his nature, and dependence was his aversion. "I cannot eat pensions and sinecures," he wrote to his wife, "they would stick in my throat." He was, therefore, in no mood to listen to Dr. Franklin's advice, to wait quietly for further orders, and he determined to snatch the earliest opportunity to return home. The Alliance was at Nantes, preparing to sail for America. He had decided to go in that frigate, when the French government interfered to change her destination. They offered, however, as an equivalent, to provide a passage for Mr. Adams in the frigate Sensible, then fitting out to take their new envoy, the Chevalier de la Luzerne. This offer he was obliged to accept, though it cost him a new delay of two months wearily spent between Nantes and Lorient. At last notice came that all was ready. On the 17th of June, 1779, the frigate set sail, bearing Mr. Adams and his son, John Quincy, who had never left him, together with M. de la Luzerne, sent to succeed Mr. Gérard, and a new secretary of legation, Barbé de Marbois. This voyage is too fully described in the "Diary" to be dwelt upon here. It is enough to say that the ship arrived safely at Boston on the 2d of August, and Mr. Adams immediately rejoined his family at Braintree, having been this time absent a little more than seventeen months.

But though restored to home, a relaxation from labor was not in reserve for him. His native State had been, since the arrival of General Gage with the Regulating Act, struggling along under a provisional form of government, which nothing sustained but the general acquiescence of the people. All efforts to replace the old charter of William and Mary, with some original system, had thus far come to nothing. Another attempt was now making, under favorable auspices, to procure a general representation of the people, through a convention of delegates from the respective towns, with the single purpose of devising a plan. The choice of these delegates was taking place just as Mr. Adams arrived, and one week afterwards he was elected by the citizens of Braintree, to represent that town.

The convention itself assembled on the first day of the ensuing month, at Cambridge, where Mr. Adams was present at its organization. An outline of the share which he had in preparing and maturing the form of the instrument submitted to their deliberations, is given in the observations prefixed to the first draft of it, in the fourth volume of the present work, where it seemed peculiarly appropriate. Repetition may therefore be dispensed with. But there is one view of the transaction which has been reserved for this place, on account of its importance, not simply in the life of Mr. Adams, but to a comprehension of the political history of Massachusetts ever since.

At the outbreak of the Revolution, in 1774, it has already been remarked that the social system of New England, as developed during more than a century by its town organizations, its schools, and its religious congregations, was considered by the inhabitants of the other colonies, as it was in fact, a great approximation to what some of them at that time denominated levelling, and others now call democracy. Whatever of an opposite tendency existed had clustered around the official agents dispatched from the mother country, or the orders symbolized by the presence of those of the Anglican Church, with whom, according to the satirist,

"Fat bishoprics were still of right divine."

Wealth was not concentrated, to any extent, in the form of capital. The few, distinguished above their neighbors in this respect, had gained and still held it in trade. Among them but a small number ventured to take the hazards of the Revolution. The remainder disappeared from the scene with the Declaration of Independence, carrying off with them such of their property as they could remove, and abandoning the rest to the chances of the struggle. The towns were not populous, but they contained a hardy, industrious, and moral population, subsisting on the fruits of their labor, mechanical, agricultural, or upon the seas, frugally expended. Boston, the capital, had made little progress in numbers for many years, yet it could not be said to show signs of decay. Its inhabitants, remarkably homogeneous, a characteristic they retained two centuries, were noted for their devotion to popular ideas. The outward manifestation of this was to be found in the town meeting or the body

meeting, where all assembled on a perfectly equal footing. And Samuel Adams, the journeyman wireworker, living on perhaps fifty cents earned every week-day, was entitled to his say as freely, though he might not be heard so readily, as his namesake whilst engaged in combining the far different wires of the corresponding committees. Yet this absolute equality of rights must not be confounded in any manner with the appearance of the same thing in the case of the proletaries of the Roman forum. All held some property, however small, which they called their own, and to which they attached a value sufficient to give to their action a tinge of conservatism. And this tinge was more or less deep in proportion to the amount of that property. The effect of the removal of the loyalists was only to expunge a class which answered the nearest to an aristocracy, but it did not erase that gradation of sentiment which will ever make itself felt even in the most democratic communities, so long as social forms shall be maintained, and property be recognized as sacred. There still remained persons holding a wide diversity of sentiments respecting the true principles upon which governments should be constructed, some strongly leaning to notions through which the distinction of ranks in the mother country is yet preserved, whilst others went to the extent of favoring the eradication of them all. Somewhere between these extremes were to be found most of the population. Hence it fell out, that among the delegates returned to the convention were persons representing almost every shade of opinion; and these were not slow to discover their affinities and to form relations with each other, which became permanent in time, and which have ever since exercised great sway in the direction of public affairs.

The most important of these associations had already made itself perceptible in the county of Essex, through the impulse which it had given adverse to the acceptance of the constitution proposed to the people by the legislature of 1778. Not content with a mere rejection, the leading minds had published their views of the proper form that should be substituted, and had set forth as a fundamental proposition that it should strongly reflect the rights of property. On the other hand, from the remoter country districts had come up warm devotees to the Revolution, jealous of all delegated authority,

who viewed with distrust the complications of a mixed form of government, and who regretted every departure from the simple idea of vesting barely necessary powers in a single representative assembly. To the former class belonged Theophilus Parsons, now making his first appearance on the stage, John Lowell, and others, whose sentiments were represented in the remarkable pamphlet already alluded to, entitled "The Essex Result." To the latter leaned Samuel Adams, Thomas Cushing, and, perhaps, the larger number of the clergy of that day. Between these conflicting views, John Adams represented men holding an intermediate position. And here commences the trace of the three forms which opinion usually takes in republican governments, visible more or less through all the subsequent history of the United States. Intimately associated with the popular side in all the preliminary measures for the overthrow of the royal authority, John Adams was not quite prepared to keep up with them in all their notions of reconstruction. His education, his professional studies, and his habits of generalization led him to favor the main features of the British form of government, provided they were modified to suit the wants of a community happily disencumbered of the burden of feudal and ecclesiastical distinctions. Nor yet could he bring himself to accord with the views of the opposite class, who claimed in their publication a preponderating influence for property. The true aim of government, in his idea, was to establish, upon the firmest footing, the rights of all who live under it, giving to no one interest power enough to become aggressive upon the rest, and yet not denying to each a share sufficient for its own protection.

In this spirit he entered the convention, where he was received with a deference due to his reputation for attainments, his public services, and his peculiar position, removed from the local wrangling which had accumulated obstacles to future success from the failure of past efforts. It appears from the testimony of members present, that soon after the opening he was called upon to give his opinions upon government at large, and that he did so in an elaborate speech, said to have been "intended to reconcile the discordant sentiments which prevailed among gentlemen from different parts of the commonwealth, and of different means of information." No record was made,

nor does a trace remain, of this speech. Its effect seems to have been favorable, in giving at once the right tone to the proceedings. The convention immediately adopted two propositions as guides to their labors. The first specified the object of their wishes, which was "to establish a free republic." The second defined the essence of it to be, "the government of a people by fixed laws of their own making." Taking this position as their point of departure, the next step was the creation of a committee of thirty-one to mature a draft of an instrument to accomplish the design. This committee, in its turn, delegated the task to a smaller one, which employed Mr. Adams. The result was a form of constitution, preceded by a bill of rights, the leading features of which were his work. This result fell in sufficiently with the views of the Essex men to secure their support, without which it would not have been adopted, whilst it recommended itself to the judgment of the Boston interest so far as to meet the approbation on the one side, of James Bowdoin, and, on the other, of Samuel Adams, both alike indispensable to its success. Here, however, the active service of John Adams, in this department, was to stop. Before the report of the large committee came up to be acted on, he had been summoned to another field of duty, which compelled him to leave his work to be matured by other hands. It is among the recommendations of its quality that it survived this transfer; and growing better by careful handling, and the suggestions of acute professional skill, as well as of sound practical experience, it soon followed him across the ocean in so satisfactory a shape, that he was able, with pride, to lay it before the distrustful as a proof that the task which his countrymen seemed to them rashly to have undertaken, was not at all beyond their ability to execute with success.

Mr. Adams, shortly after reaching home, had closed his mission by the preparation of an elaborate review of the state of the different nations in Europe, so far as it might have a bearing on the interests of the United States. This able paper came in at a moment when its elevated tone, contrasting favorably with the bitter personal controversies among other persons in the foreign service, by which the congress had been distracted, contributed to the decision in his case, which soon afterwards took place. Pressed on all sides by powerful conflicting inter-

ests, that body had finally been driven to the necessity of instituting an investigation into the causes of the difficulties which had occurred. The committee charged with this duty, made a report embodying their conclusions in ten propositions, which came up for consideration on the 13th of April, 1779. The main object, embraced in two of these, the fourth and fifth, undoubtedly was, to effect a revocation of all the foreign appointments, with a view to begin anew. They were in the following words:—

"4. That suspicions and animosities have arisen among the said commissioners, which may be highly prejudicial to the honor and interests of these United States.

"5. That the appointments of the said commissioners be vacated, and that new appointments be made."

The relation which these propositions held to each other is obvious enough; and had congress proceeded to a vote upon the ten as a whole, the effect would have been to vacate every existing commission abroad. Instead of this, they preferred to act upon them separately. The friends of the persons implicated, differing in every other respect, were yet, by a common interest, united in insisting that the name of each one should be passed upon by a distinct vote. In obedience to this requirement, Franklin, Deane, Arthur and William Lee, and Ralph Izard were successively subjected to the ordeal, and all shared the same condemnation. But when the turn of Mr. Adams came, a serious difficulty at once presented itself. In point of fact, he had not merited to be included in the list at all. For during his brief and in some respects compulsory stay in the commission, he had carefully avoided taking a side in the quarrels, and he had labored earnestly, though in vain, to bring the disputants to some sort of understanding. For this course he had received a high parting compliment from the Count de Vergennes; and nobody had thought to censure him but Mr. Izard, whose overzealous interference with the duties of the commission in negotiating a treaty he had felt obliged to repel. To involve him in the condemnation designed for conduct, the greater part of which had taken place before he became a member of the commission, would be in the highest degree unjust. Yet, if he were made an exception, it was clear that the plan of thorough renewal of the foreign service would break

down. The friends of Arthur Lee, who were likewise friends of Mr. Adams, and averse to the contemplated reform, were willing to involve both in the common censure with Franklin and Deane, the better to shelter Lee from being singled out as an object of sacrifice. Whilst those who had seldom sympathized with Mr. Adams in his congressional life were ready to acquit him, that they might the more unequivocally point their verdict against Mr. Lee.

Thus came about what seems the paradoxical record of congress, a consequence, not uncommon in legislative bodies, of the operation of secondary motives in perverting the natural and direct determination of public questions. The recall of Dr. Franklin, as the necessary effect of including him in the condemnation, had not been fully contemplated until the question was brought up through the terms of the fifth proposition, and it became indispensable to cast about for a person to succeed him at the French court. The measure was understood to be as unwelcome to Count de Vergennes, anxious to retain Franklin, and more than suspecting the fidelity of Lee, as it certainly was, on every account, utterly inexpedient. Hence, upon a new presentation of the question, it appeared, that instead of a general assent, as before, but seven votes were given in the affirmative. The next name subjected to reconsideration was that of Arthur Lee; and his friends, having changed their votes on the recall of Franklin, now rallied with the more energy against recalling him. Although twenty-two out of thirty-seven of the members are recorded as voting for it, yet, owing to the mode of their distribution, in the respective delegations voting by States, it appeared that but four States approved of it, four were divided, and therefore neutralized, and four were against it. The effect was to keep Lee as minister in Spain, to defeat the adoption of the fifth proposition, and to leave parties pretty much in the state in which they were before the attempt of the committee to draw them out of their embarrassments had been made. In other words, the work was all to be begun over again.

Simultaneously with this agitation, other movements of far greater consequence had been going on in Philadelphia. In July, 1778, M. Gérard, one of the chief clerks in the foreign office at Paris, and the same person who had conducted the

negotiation of the treaties with the United States on the part of France, appeared as a minister vested with a commission to represent that court in the United States. His real duty was, to aid in establishing the influence of his country over the councils of America, and to guard against any essential backslidings from the policy marked out by the terms of the alliance. His instructions fixed his attention upon the following objects: —

1. The counteraction of British influence.
2. The ratification of the treaties already executed.
3. The parrying of all applications to France for money.
4. The arrangement of a military coöperation with the French fleet.
5. The defeat of all projects against Canada.

He entered upon the work thus laid out for him with more vivacity than discretion. Had he waited a short time, the better to master the peculiarities of race and of character with which he had to deal, to comprehend more fully the motives of the chief actors, and to accommodate himself to the strange state of things in which he was placed, it would have been better for his country, besides saving him the labor of afterwards removing obstacles which his very precipitation interposed to the ultimate attainment of his desires.[1]

The first occasion upon which this novel influence was sensibly felt, occurred upon the presentation of a letter by M. Gérard to congress, on the 9th of February, 1779, announcing the offer of Spain to mediate between England and France, and recommending the appointment, on the part of the United States, of some person to reside in Europe clothed with the necessary powers to act in the contingency of Great Britain's accepting the proposition. This overture was joyfully hailed by congress as an act far more decisive in favor of America than the facts really warranted, and it immediately suggested a line of policy harmonizing with their sanguine expectations rather than with the reality. Two weeks later, a committee, to whom the letter had been referred, made a report, explaining the principles upon which the terms of pacification might be arranged.

[1] The introduction to the French translation of Botta's *History of the War of Independence*, written by L. de Sevelinges, appears to have been founded on a faithful study of the private papers of M. Gérard, and it doubtless draws from that source the statements of opinions as well as of facts.

The ultimatum covered three points only. 1. Independence. 2. The fisheries. 3. The navigation of the Mississippi. For the sake of securing these objects, others were enumerated as matters for negotiation, among which were the acquisition of Nova Scotia on the north and Florida on the south, the East India trade, the slave-trade, the right of settling alien territories, and a reciprocal guarantee of American possessions. Out of all this, nothing was agreeable to the policy of the French cabinet, which desired to confine the American ultimatum to the naked point of substantial independence of Great Britain, and to leave every thing beyond to take the chances of a negotiation. In the earnest desire to obtain the necessary modifications of the American project, M. Gérard gradually suffered himself to be drawn in as a party to the dissensions in congress, until he came habitually to regard those who favored his ideas as the friends of France, and those adverse to them as Tories, secretly devoted to the object of obtaining a separate reconciliation with Great Britain.[1]

The long struggle which followed this beginning, was the most memorable of all that took place in congress after the question of independence. The main point on which it turned, was the effort to keep the right to the fisheries an ultimatum in the negotiation of any peace. This was a right peculiarly dear to the eastern States, to which they clung with great tenacity. They were, therefore, arrayed in a body in its defence, with Pennsylvania, as usual, on their side, whilst on the other were ranged New York and the four southern States. The latter were not indisposed to favor the demand, so long as they could persist in a like claim for the free navigation of the Mississippi. But this claim proved peculiarly unwelcome to the French government, which saw at once the embarrassment it would make in a negotiation carried on under the mediation of Spain, the very power from which it was to be obtained. M. Gérard left no stone unturned to procure the abandonment of this proposition, and he proved successful. It was determined that,

[1] Had not M. Gérard happily surrendered his place early to a more conciliatory man, he would have created the same sort of divisions which M. Genet labored not without success to introduce many years later. The testimony of General Lafayette, whose motives were incomparably higher, is conclusive on this point. *Memoires*, &c. tom. iv. p. 130.

however valuable to the southern country the right in question might be, it was not to be permitted to stand in the way of the establishment of peace. This point once gained, the next was to overpower the resistance of New England to a similar withdrawal on their side. But such was the tenacity of Samuel Adams, Elbridge Gerry, and their friends, that this victory could only be won by making concessions in some other form. Although M. Gérard ultimately prevailed in expunging from the instructions to the minister who should be empowered to negotiate a peace, every limitation beyond the single article of independence and a designated line of boundaries, he could not prevent the establishment of another and independent authority to offer a treaty of commerce to the king of Great Britain, the main condition of which should be the security of the fisheries in exchange for privileges of trade. For obvious, though opposite reasons, all were induced to concur in a proposition that any stipulation affecting this right of fishing must receive the assent of every separate State of the Union before the treaty could become binding; but it most satisfied Massachusetts by securing her against a surrender of it without her consent. In this shape, the claim was not open to objection as constituting a possible bar to the attainment of the great object of the war, national independence. So the French minister was fain, for the moment, to let the measure pass. But it was only a delay, for the purpose of enabling his government the more effectually to annul it in a later stage of the proceedings, as the sequel clearly shows.

Concurrently with this establishment of a diplomatic policy, contingent upon the first symptoms of a disposition in Great Britain to treat, happened the organization by congress of a new mission to Spain. The instructions in this case were to the effect that a further effort should be made to prevail upon that power to come in under the secret provisions of the treaty already made with France for admitting her as a party to its engagements. But if that proposition should be unsatisfactory, then new offers were to be held out to induce her to join the alliance. The main one consisted in the proposal of a guarantee of the Floridas, if she should obtain them by maintaining the war with Great Britain. But a compensation for this was to be gained in the much prized right of navigating the Mississippi

down to the sea. An effort was likewise directed to be made to procure a cession of some port on that river below the thirty-first degree of latitude, and likewise the loan of a sum of money. Thus in this case, as in the other, what originally formed one of the proposed ultimata in the negotiation for a general pacification, and might there prove a stumbling-block to all progress, was dexterously transferred to another place, in which the well-understood indisposition of Spain to concede any such privileges as those in question would have no ill effect outside of the negotiation with that single power.

On the whole, M. Gérard seems thus far to have had every reason to be satisfied with the success of his labors. Upon the main point of bringing the United States to be content with independence of Great Britain as the sole condition of a pacification, and leaving every thing else subject to the chances of negotiation, he had been entirely triumphant. If this object, the only and overruling motive for the course of France, for which she had risked a war, could be once secured, she would have no cause to apprehend further embarrassment to herself from the interposition of secondary questions in which she might feel little interest. The mission to Spain was subsidiary to the policy, directed from the first by the Count de Vergennes with extraordinary industry, of involving that power in the combination against Great Britain. And although he now had strong reasons to doubt whether any of the desired concessions would be made to America by her, he saw no danger to his own plans from the failure of the application, and was, therefore, not unwilling that it should be hazarded. The case was otherwise with the proposal to open an avenue to a reconciliation with Great Britain through the offer of commercial advantages, and the revival of the old affiliations of trade. The influence which had carried this point against him was that of the Adamses and the Lees, men whom his agent, M. Gérard, habitually represented as identified with the Tory advocates of Great Britain. One of these men, Arthur Lee, who had already excited in his own mind suspicions of treachery in his place as commissioner to the French court, for which he had gone the length of excluding him from information freely furnished to his colleagues, had been set down as absolutely in league with the British ministry by his more impetuous deputy.

Under these circumstances the question, who should be selected to fill the responsible posts thus created, became one of the greatest importance to France. M. Gérard seems to have exerted his great influence not only to effect the exclusion of Lee, who fell a sacrifice in the conflict of parties, but also to determine the selection of the commissioner for treating of peace, in which he did not succeed so well. There is every reason to believe that at this time his preferences were for Mr. Jay. But Mr. Jay, through his preceding career, had thrown the weight of New York so decidedly in the scale against New England, and he had so generally fallen in with the policy of the southern States and of the French minister, by refusing to insist upon the fisheries as a fundamental principle of national independence, as to rouse in the New England delegates the greatest repugnance to intrusting him with the vital interests of that negotiation. The same uneasiness pointed out John Adams as the only person in whom they could implicitly confide. At the same time, their friendly relations with Arthur Lee's brothers dictated a resolute opposition on their part to any attempt to supersede him in the position to which he had already been assigned under a former appointment as commissioner to the Spanish court. On the other hand, New York, and a majority of the southern members, anxious to conciliate the French court by creating a new mission to Spain in the place of Arthur Lee's, were not unwilling to assign Mr. Adams to that place, provided that Mr. Jay could be made agreeable to New England as the agent to execute the more important trust. But New England, acting at that time in unison with Pennsylvania, could not be made to listen to that proposal. The consequence of this triangular contest was a compromise, by which New England obtained the appointment of Mr. Adams, which her delegates deemed of such vital importance, to negotiate with Great Britain, whilst the other party secured the substitution of Mr. Jay for Mr. Lee in the mission to Spain. On the 26th of September, the trial of strength, which terminated this long contest, took place. The issue of two ballots proved the impossibility of either electing Mr. Jay to the peace commission, or of reelecting Mr. Lee to Spain. These points being settled to the satisfaction of all, the next day witnessed a change of policy on each side. Whilst the opposition to Mr. Adams was with-

drawn, Mr. Jay was, with similar unanimity, assigned to the court of Spain. It was the victory of New England, determined to have a man upon whose courage she could depend, whose integrity she had never had reason to doubt, and whose firmness would abide the severest trials.

Neither was New England, however unwelcome to her the unavoidable sacrifice of Arthur Lee, at all dissatisfied with the selection made of his successor; for although, from his entrance into public life, Mr. Jay had never been acting in unison with her more impulsive delegates, he had succeeded in earning that degree of respect and confidence from them which honesty of purpose and integrity of life, joined to great abilities, never fail in the long run to command through all the vicissitudes of public life, even from the most imbittered opponents. The only person destined to be disappointed by the issue of this business was M. Gérard, as he very soon had occasion to discover; for he had obtained the removal of Mr. Lee at the expense of the substitution of perhaps the two men of all America upon whom the influences which France could bring to bear to bend their views to her notions of policy would act with the least possible effect. Indeed, throughout his course in America, M. Gérard had fallen into the grievous error of measuring the motives of the leading American statesmen by the corrupted standard with which he had become familiar in the old world. And in denominating one side as devoted to France, and the other as the partisans of England, he had committed equal injustice to the sterling patriotism which inspired both, whatever differences of opinion they might entertain as to the measures most proper to carry it out.

On the 20th of October, Mr. Laurens, the president of congress, transmitted the two commissions; one to negotiate a treaty of peace, the other a treaty of commerce, with Great Britain, whenever the moment should occur at which the sovereign and his subjects should become reconciled to the surrender of what was already irrecoverable. The Chevalier de la Luzerne, the successor of M. Gérard, who had come to America in the same frigate with Mr. Adams, had already addressed a letter of congratulation to him, and had offered him a reconveyance to France in the returning ship. The labors in which he was engaged for his native State, were, of course, brought to

a sudden close. Yet he continued to attend the meetings of the convention until two days before he actually embarked. With the single exception of the trust which he had taken so leading a part in imposing upon Washington, no responsibility equal to this had yet devolved upon any single man. It was, to be sure, only contingent; but however far removed the day of its occurrence, little doubt remained even in England that it must come at last. And whenever it should come, the severe test to which it might put both his moral and intellectual qualities, could not escape his anxious observation. Formidable as the task seemed, Mr. Adams viewed it without apprehension. It was in the nature of his spirit to rise with the occasion that happened to call it into action. Responsibility was a thing which he had never courted, but which, when offered, he never shunned. And it is a circumstance worthy to be well noted, that in the repeated instances in which he staked every thing of value to a highminded man upon the issue of his single determination, the result never failed to confirm the correctness of his decision.

On the 13th of November, 1779, Mr. Adams was once more on the deck of The Sensible, and again accompanied by his eldest son. M. de Marbois, on the outward voyage, had been so much impressed by what he saw of this youth, then only ten years old, that he sent his father a special injunction to carry him back, to profit by the advantages of a European education. In addition, he took this time his second son, Charles, Mr. John Thaxter as his private secretary, and quite a numerous retinue of youths, whose parents availed themselves of his protection to get them to Europe. Besides all these was Francis Dana, whom congress had most judiciously selected as secretary to the mission, with some view to employing him ultimately in other responsible capacities abroad. The details of this voyage, the leaky state of the ship, compelling the commander to seek safety in the first Spanish port, and the fatiguing winter journey through Spain, from Ferrol to Paris, are sufficiently given in the "Diary."[1] On the 5th of February, 1780, Mr. Adams reached the French capital, prepared to take up his abode in it until called into active service.

[1] *Works*, vol. iii. pp. 229–258.

But first of all he felt it proper to address a note to Count de Vergennes, apprising him of his arrival and of the twofold nature of the duties imposed upon him, and soliciting advice as to the fitting course to be taken towards the government of Great Britain. The suggestion, that any course was thought of, seems instantly to have fixed the attention of the minister to the possibility of opening a negotiation through this commercial channel, which might entangle all the threads of his own policy. His answer led to a correspondence, that sowed the seeds of mutual distrust. Mr. Adams felt that he was expected to exercise no discretion of his own, but simply to obey the directions of France, whilst, on the other hand, the count began to suspect that the great object of all his fears, a reconciliation between Great Britain and the colonies, might be placed beyond his power to prevent, if it should happen that the mother country, listening to her interests rather than to her passions, should choose to accept such an overture. As it is material to a clear comprehension of the subsequent transactions to understand the precise position occupied by France at this time, a brief review of her policy will not be wholly out of place.

The diplomacy of England and France during the latter half of the eighteenth century furnishes a striking illustration of the marked contrast in their national character. On the one side is bluntness, amounting occasionally to arrogance, and want of flexibility, redeemed by a general spirit of sincerity and truth, whilst, on the other, is the beauty of courtly persuasion and the skill of adaptation to all the necessities of the occasion, subject to the drawback of disingenuousness and unscrupulous deception. This last characteristic is nowhere more painfully prominent than during the latter years of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth. Remarkable as that period was for the accumulation of troubles which came down with such concentrated force upon the devoted head of his innocent successor, it is in no respect more noted than for the refinements introduced into the direction of the foreign affairs. Not content with the ordinary channels used by the ministers of the crown, the monarch gradually established a secret organization of his own, by which, through agents clothed with no public character, he communicated to his representatives at foreign courts such of his wishes as he preferred to see executed, regardless of the

instructions which they might be at the same time receiving from the regular sources. So privately was this systematic deception conducted, that it is asserted neither the prime ministers nor even the more seductive mistresses of the monarch could ever succeed in obtaining a clue to the causes which were constantly occurring to neutralize or to transform their policy. The effect of such a system upon the ambassadors of France at foreign courts could only be to school them in the practice of compounding duplicity. It not only applied to the powers to which they were sent, but still more to those which had sent them. It was to confirm deception as the rule, and to uphold truth only as the exception, reserved for the exclusive benefit of the monarch himself. The tenure of office on such terms was of itself equivalent to the abnegation of any exercise whatever of a moral sense in the execution of a public trust.

In the midst of this complication of things, Gravier de Vergennes spent his early manhood. From obscure beginnings he gradually made his way in the diplomatic service, through thirty years of vicissitudes in the ministerial government, by the aptitude he showed for the successive labors to which he was assigned. During this long period the double instructions were in constant operation. They were used with decided effect to betray the confidence and paralyze the policy of the Duke de Choiseul. But although de Vergennes was formed in this school, and, in a succession of missions, became privy to its lessons, the effect upon his character seems to have been not so much to corrupt it, for his natural disposition remained good to the end, as to blunt his sensibilities, and to narrow the scope of his statesmanship within the circle of French casuistry. Cold, sagacious, absolute in all his sentiments,[1] he combined his means with his ends in a manner seldom failing of the desired result, without troubling himself to inquire of the further merits of his policy. Of the enthusiasm characteristic of his nation he had but little. Of the moderation which leads a

[1] Droz styles him "*partisan de la monarchie absolue*" in connection with one of his first ministerial acts, advising against the recall of the parliaments. *Règne de Louis* XVI. tom. i. p. 149. See also Jefferson, who, rather liking him, chose to charge to age what was more certainly due to temperament and education united. *Writings*, edited by H. A. Washington, vol. ii. pp. 108–9.

calm man to prefer a quiet and simple method to a noisy and violent one, he had a great share. But the nature of the means to be used, or the abstract propriety of using them, to him was of little moment. Thus at Constantinople, when his sagacity predicted the disasters that would overwhelm the Turks, as a consequence of the directions of Choiseul to precipitate them into a war with Russia, he nevertheless went on to execute them without remorse, claiming to himself only the credit of saving the whole corruption fund placed at his disposal for the purpose. So, too, in Sweden, torn to pieces by the dissensions of the hats and caps, when Gustavus, under the instigation of France, with the oath of office yet fresh on his lips, planned the overthrow of the liberties of his country he had just sworn to support, Vergennes, dispatched for the purpose of overseeing the operation, coolly fixed the moment at which the plot was put in execution, although after its success he wrote home his opinion of the incompetency of the very man he had thus helped to absolute power. Thirty years of experience in a school of policy, thus purely French, had resulted in making de Vergennes one of the most skilful of her diplomatists. Hence, when the accession of Louis the Sixteenth brought with it a necessity for reorganizing the cabinet, his established reputation at once pointed him out to the young king as a suitable person to direct the foreign affairs.

The moment when this change took place must be regarded as forming an epoch in the history of the civilized world. Louis the Fifteenth terminated a reign of disasters, of reckless profusion, and of unexampled profligacy, just at the period when Lord North was carrying through the British House of Commons the series of measures designed to chastise the refractory colonists, and to make an example of the people of Boston. The new cabinet of France, with the humiliation fresh on their minds, which their country had suffered only eleven years before from the triumphant arrogance of the elder Pitt, soon fixed their attention upon these symptoms of an opportunity for overwhelming retaliation. Behind them rested the wave of continental opinion, seldom favorable to English pride, and now by no means averse to a result that might effectually bring it to a fall. The discontent of the colonies had not been suffered to pass unnoticed by the Duke de Choiseul in the latter days

of his ministry, nor had efforts been spared to gain accurate information of the character and designs of the population. But when Louis the Sixteenth ascended the throne, the troubles had gained such a height as at once to demand the settlement of some definite line of policy. Count de Vergennes did not arrive from Sweden to take possession of his new post until the month of July, 1774. The results of the consultations of the new ministry do not make themselves externally visible until November, 1775, when the organization of the secret committee of congress, unquestionably stimulated by the hope of assistance from France, opened three distinct channels of communication with her, through each of which whispers came well calculated to animate resistance. As early as February, 1776, Arthur Lee wrote from London that the exportation from France of arms and ammunition would not be noticed, and that a military leader of the highest reputation would be furnished, if desired. On the 30th of April, M. Dumas, at the Hague, forwarded the minutes of a conference with the French minister at that court, to the effect that his government was deterred from rendering active aid to the colonies only by the fear that the difference was yet not beyond the possibility of reconciliation. And a few days later, Dr. Dubourg, at Paris, having had a confidential interview at Versailles with an intimate friend of the minister Turgot, received an explicit assurance of the deep interest with which the government viewed the struggle, and of their desire to furnish the colonists with money to sustain their resistance, provided that no committal with Great Britain should follow the failure of the enterprise. Thus early are the evidences supplied, from outside of the French cabinet, of the disposition prevailing within it to stimulate the colonies to resistance. This was done at a time when a solemn peace, entered into only twelve years before, was professedly binding both nations, in which the parties had contracted to "give the greatest attention to maintain between themselves and their dominions and subjects a reciprocal friendship and correspondence, without permitting, on either side, any kind of hostilities by sea or by land, to be committed from henceforth, for any cause, or under any pretence whatsoever; and carefully to avoid every thing, which might hereafter prejudice the union happily reëstablished, and give no assistance or protection,

directly or indirectly, to those who would cause any prejudice to either of the high contracting parties." Such is the substance of the first article of the Treaty of Paris of 1763.

This exposition of the absence of good faith in the French ministry towards Great Britain[1] is essential to the right comprehension of the subsequent narrative, because it shows that Mr. Adams was not mistaken in his belief of the impolicy of staking the salvation of America upon an implicit confidence in the presence of it. So far as the *interests* of France and the United States led the same way, there is no cause to doubt that a reliance of the latter on the coöperation of the former could be safely entertained. That these interests would go the length of establishing a total separation between the United States and the mother country, and sustaining the claims of the former to independence, might reasonably be counted on. But beyond that point sprung up a wide variety of questions, upon which no similar identity of interests could be perceived, and where some surer support to confidence became necessary. And here was the place where opinions very naturally diverged. Mr. Adams, with one class, judging from the past, had little trust in the moral integrity of French policy, and was, therefore, anxious to extend the connections of the United States, so as to avoid too exclusive dependence upon French good faith; whilst Dr. Franklin and another class, trying to believe in the existence of that good faith, inclined to regard all efforts to gain support elsewhere as idle and superfluous labor. This difference of sentiment must be kept steadily in mind, in order to retain the thread of the negotiations about to be described.

To an attentive student of the complicated system which has grown out of the mutual relations of the nations of modern Europe, as displayed by the expositions they themselves have made, the last idea that will suggest itself is that of the prevalence of any exalted sentiment or generous emotion. He may see abundant traces of passions, great and small, of extraordinary sagacity, singular abilities in pursuing some desired object, exquisite refinements in policy, and every conceivable variety of craft and stratagem, leavened by a good deal of

[1] Count de Vergennes is clearly condemned on this point by French writers in all other respects disposed to eulogize him. Flassan, *Diplomatie Française*, tom. vii. p. 151. Marbois, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, pp. 153–154.

that narrowest kind of philanthropy which consults the temporal interests of one community of God's creatures, without regard to the injuries which may be inflicted on the world besides. The great diplomatists, without exception, proceed upon one maxim, which is, to advance their own country in power, regardless, if not at the cost, of every other. The principle upon which the elaborately constructed theory of the balance of power rests, is nothing more than pure selfishness, which, assumed to be the ruling motive of each nation in its particular action, must be jealously guarded against and counteracted by combinations among the rest. The notion that the ministers of Louis the Sixteenth, who had grown gray in the service of this system, in taking the course which they did towards America, could have been actuated by any other than the accepted ideas of their day, or that they shared in the enthusiasm generated in the hearts of the French nation by the sight of brave men struggling for liberty against power, seems entirely out of keeping with any thing that previously happened in their lives, or that marked the rest of their career. The head of the cabinet, the Count de Maurepas, a veteran in the petty intrigues of courts, seldom troubled his mind with abstractions, or indeed with the grave realities around him, further than was indispensable to preserve himself in favor. The ideas of Count de Vergennes had never swerved from the doctrine of his time, which was to maintain France as the centre around which the various European powers were to be kept moving in their respective orbits. Of the remaining members not one was tinged with the notions of the new school in France, unless it were M. Turgot, and he was so much absorbed in executing his projects of reform in the administration of his own particular department, and the restoration of the finances, as to look upon the addition of any novel element to his calculations with aversion rather than good-will. Out of all the persons clothed with power, not one was so likely to be carried away by his emotions as the impressible and good-hearted young sovereign himself; but there is abundant proof to show that he was by no means inclined towards America. He feared to nurse the spirit of insubordination, which terminated so tragically to himself; and whatever may have been the feelings of irresponsible men and women around the

court, it does not appear that he or his advisers for him were disposed, at this period, to forget the hint of Joseph of Austria, that "his trade was *to rule*."

But in order to establish this point, little need now remains of resort to general reasoning. The facts are sufficiently before the world, upon which a judgment may be definitively made up. It appears that early in the year 1776, Count de Vergennes prepared for the perusal of the king a paper described as "a memoir of considerations relative to the interest which the two powers of France and Spain can have in the agitation going on in the British colonies of North America, and in the results that may ensue." This paper, after it had been read by Louis, was, by his order, transmitted to M. Turgot, with a request for his opinion, to be given early, in writing; and Count de Vergennes, in executing the order, added the not insignificant suggestion that Spain had already been pressing for, and was then awaiting the issue of his Majesty's determination.

This happened on the 12th of March. The paper itself precisely corresponds to the character of its author. It deals in no generalization or breadth of views. It limits the nature of the question to the consideration of the effect that a family quarrel, which had fallen out in Great Britain, might have upon the interests of France and Spain. It skilfully sets the possible benefits and dangers flowing to them from it in opposite scales. Among the benefits, it places in bold relief the exhaustion which might ensue from a long continuance of civil war to both sides, as well the victors as the vanquished, as well to the colonies as to the mother country. Among the dangers, it enumerates, on the one hand, the chance of a reconciliation, by which the heated passions of the combatants might be turned into a channel of common wrath against France, and, on the other, the possibility that the American possessions of France and Spain might succumb to the attacks of one party or the other, should the contest end in a separation. Having thus weighed the various probabilities, this remarkable paper concludes with advising —

1. That no overt act likely to incur the dangers pointed out should be hazarded;

2. That total inaction was inexpedient, since it would not protect the two powers from the ill-will of England;

3. That the continuance of the contest, at least for one year, by drawing off a large military force from Europe, would be advantageous;

4. That to secure this object, the British ministry should be lulled into perfect security as to the intentions of the two powers.

From these conclusions, worthy of Machiavel himself, the Count recommended a corresponding line of policy. Great Britain was to be maintained in full assurance of the good disposition of France, whilst, at the same time, arms and money, with munitions of war, should be secretly sent to the Americans. No compacts were to be made, likely to prove any thing against France with her powerful neighbor, in case she should recover her authority in America either by reconciliation or by arms. All that was proposed to be done was to extend sufficient aid to gain a temporary advantage by continuing the war, which was a wiser course than to permit indifference to be construed by either party as fear. Lastly, the duty of the two powers, in any event, was to put themselves on a strong footing, so that they might be prepared to act with effect in case of emergency.

This paper, redolent of the wary diplomacy of the old school rather than of the warmer emotions just then making their way into the popular heart of France, has not yet been laid before the world.[1] For a long time its existence was known only by the discovery, in the celebrated iron chest of Louis the Sixteenth, of the response to it, which was invited by that monarch from M. Turgot. That response is by far the most remarkable paper of the two, as indicating a mind of much wider compass, embracing within its grasp many of the remote as well as the immediate consequences of this dispute. In the disposition to moral discrimination, there is but a shade of difference. Agreeing in the general conclusions of his colleague, M. Turgot extended his speculations into future contingencies very much further. Laying it down as certain, that any hostile demonstration against Britain would be the most likely way to acceler-

[1] By the kindness of Mr. Sparks, the writer has been permitted to examine a copy of this document, as well as of others used in the course of this analysis of French policy, which were obtained by him from the archives of France. His obligation to Mr. Sparks for this great service has been elsewhere more fully acknowledged.

ate a reconciliation between her and her colonies, which, in its turn, would be a prelude to a joint attack upon the weak and exposed dependencies of the two crowns in America, he expressed unequivocal repugnance to any such measure. The most desirable result he considered to be a long and exhausting contest in America, ending in the victory of Great Britain, but not without the utter ruin of the resources of the refractory colonies. On the other hand, the idea of these colonies succeeding in establishing their independence was to be contemplated as inevitably involving an ultimate abandonment of every political and commercial restraint upon the American dependencies of the other European nations. For this effect it would be well that all of them should begin to prepare themselves. The reflections upon the change of policy proper to meet such a contingency constitute the most luminous portion of the paper. The deductions made from his opinions were not quite accordant with those of Count de Vergennes, though practically they did not differ. He urged that peace should, on no account, be broken. Yet he would not refuse assistance to the colonies such as could be afforded without a palpable violation of neutrality; and he recommended the most effective preparation for whatever events the future might have in store.[1]

These two memoirs, taken together, furnish a perfect key to the action of the French cabinet during the American Revolution, and set at rest every doubt of the motives which actuated their policy. Sympathy with Americans, as victims of oppression or as champions of liberty, had no share in it whatever. The cardinal principle was what French writers denominate *égoisme*, pure and undiluted, seeking to fortify itself against the unwelcome preponderance of an arrogant neighbor, by cherishing the germs of permanent discord in his bosom. Yet it should not escape notice, that though these papers agree in utter want of sympathy with the fate of the colonists, one of them regarding their exhaustion, and the other their final subjection, as desirable results, the particulars in which they differ furnish some light on the respective characteristics of the

[1] The conclusions of this memoir were first published in the remarkable book, entitled "*Politique de tous les Cabinets de l'Europe*," an attentive study of which is indispensable to the knowledge of French policy during the last century. The whole memoir is now found in every edition of the author's works.

authors. Count de Vergennes sketches a policy of deception and duplicity preparatory to a possible declaration of war, whilst M. Turgot clearly inclines to peace with but a partial violation of the solemn engagements entered into with England. In point of fact, he was sincerely disposed to pacific counsels, not solely on abstract grounds, but because he foresaw the derangement a war would occasion in the finances, which showed even then, in spite of all his care, a startling deficit to the extent of twenty millions of livres per annum.

The result of these consultations was, that the colonists were to be encouraged without in any way committing France openly with Great Britain. But Count de Vergennes was not long in meeting an occasion for extending that encouragement quite as far, to say the least, as was consistent with fidelity to this policy. On the 2d of May, 1776, or less than one month from the date of Turgot's paper, in a conference with Louis the Sixteenth, which he observed extraordinary precautions to keep secret, he read to him a letter, praying for a grant of one million of livres, to be appropriated to the use of the insurgent colonies through the medium of Caron de Beaumarchais. At the same time he submitted a draft of instructions to that person, which he could not trust to any hands in his bureau, but which he would employ a son, fourteen years old, of tried discretion, to copy for him. This money was to be transmitted under the greatest precautions to give it the semblance of private aid. The count concluded by asking leave to notify the chief of the bureau of foreign affairs in Spain of this proceeding, and to urge him to obtain authority from his sovereign to do the like. The docile Louis granted all he asked. The money accordingly went to stimulate the efforts of the American insurgents. Yet it is important to a right estimate of the character of De Vergennes for truth to remember that in the face of this act, which he could not have forgotten, he, some years later, not only ventured upon a falsehood to the British minister in denying every thing of the kind, but had the audacity to vouch in Dr. Franklin to confirm what he said, thus placing his witness under such difficult circumstances, that even his silence was equivalent to an affirmation of the fraud. Dr. Franklin has himself recorded the occasion, which was in 1782, when Mr. Thomas Grenville came to Paris to confer with the French minister about a peace.

It was to Grenville that Count de Vergennes solemnly declared that France had never given the least encouragement to America until long after the breach was made, and *independence declared.* "There sits Mr. Franklin," added he, "who knows the fact, and can contradict me, if I do not speak the truth."[1]

In the examination of the great movements of the world, it is too much the practice of writers to slide gently over the grave delinquencies of public men, as if by the difficulties of their position they were to be regarded as absolved from the duty of obedience to those fundamental principles of morals universally regarded as binding in private life. The consequence is, that history, instead of teaching purity and exalting excellence, gives its sanction, at least, to equivocation, and palliates the sophistry to which all men, without instigation, are already, by nature, quite too prone. The disposition of Americans to be grateful to France, for the aid which they received in establishing their independence, must not be permitted to drown, in one wave of laudation, all traces of what every Frenchman did towards it. Such a course would place the French cabinet and the French people, Maurepas and Lafayette, on the same general level, when the truth requires that a broad line of discrimination should be drawn between them. With the former, the exclusive intent was to demolish the towering influence of Great Britain. And in following it out, as Count de Vergennes did, with undeniable skill and perseverance, it is only necessary to resort to the evidence he has himself supplied, to understand the extent of the obligation which he has laid upon America.

Three months after the reading of the secret paper already referred to, he read another document, but this time before the council, at which the sovereign presided. The prevailing tendencies of his mind make themselves again sufficiently perceptible. After repeating the axiom of his day, the natural enmity of the two nations, he adroitly dwelt upon the anxiety felt by Great Britain that this unique opportunity of avenging upon her

[1] These words are quoted by Dr. Franklin in his journal, without a word of comment. *Writings*, edited by Mr. Sparks, vol. ix. p. 274. The audacity of the falsehood is not exceeded even by the deliberate denial of the family compact made by the Count de Bussy to Lord Chatham. The latter is described by Flassan as a "*mensonge politique*," just as if, when the intent to deceive exists, a lie could change its character from the superaddition of an epithet.

the insults, the outrages, and the treachery which France had so often experienced at her hands, should be suffered to pass unimproved. On the other hand, he enlarged upon the nature of the temptation now presented to wipe out the disgrace of the surprise of 1755, and all its consequent disasters and mortifications, by profiting of the civil war waged three thousand miles from the metropolis, with the forces of England scattered in all directions, to strike a blow which would paralyze for a long time to come all her power to do mischief in Europe.

And here, it cannot be doubted, is to be seen the real motive of the cabinet of Louis the Sixteenth in their American policy. In enumerating its possible benefits, generosity of spirit or sympathy with liberty was not even thought of. It was the cry of vengeance for France, humiliated by the domineering Anglicism of William Pitt,[1] and stimulated by the fear that some new cast of the dice might bring down the same or even worse misfortunes, if not anticipated by a skilful use of the present opportunity. Sharing in the idea, almost universal at that day both in Europe and America, which Turgot, however, does not appear to have entertained, that a final separation of the American colonies would forever prostrate Great Britain as a leading power of the world, Count de Vergennes set it down as certain that the attainment of this object, as putting an end to the long rivalry of these contending nations, supplied the true motive for all the exertions of France. He little dreamed of the stunning effect upon herself which was to follow the recoil of her blow. Nor yet was Great Britain less deluded. For the waste, on her side, of hundreds of millions in a hopeless struggle did far more to impair her permanent strength than the loss of her dependencies. The problems of national greatness are not yet all worked out, neither is it very flattering to the pride of man to observe how often results the most opposite to what were expected from his cunningly devised inventions, happen to make his most solemn pretensions to sagacity a mockery and a show.

In the system of Count de Vergennes, two ideas had undisputed predominance. The one, the necessity of preserving an intimate union and coöperation between France and Spain. The

[1] Speaking, long afterwards, of the treaty of 1783, Count de Vergennes uses these words: "*Elle a effacé la tache de celle de* 1763."

other, the duty of precluding the chance of a reunion of the British power, at the cost, to the two crowns, of their American possessions. Had Spain responded as warmly to his appeal as he desired, and as Turgot feared she might, he would not probably have been mistaken in his estimate of the length and expensiveness of the contest, which he proposed to risk. But that country doubted and hesitated until the march of events made a decision unavoidable to France, then drew back, complained of that decision as precipitate, and left her ally to get on as she might alone. Yet in despite of all these discouragements, nothing is more remarkable throughout the struggle than the patient deference manifested by the Count to all the caprices, the narrow ideas, and the vacillation of the Spanish court. In regard to the second point, the Count's uneasiness had been displayed as early as when the draft of a treaty of commerce, which had been prepared in congress by John Adams, was presented to him by the commissioners as indicating the extent of their proposed relations with France. He received it with extreme surprise, and not without misgivings as to the motives that led to the offer. He expected prayers for assistance, and pledges of unlimited devotion. Dr. Franklin augured, from the reception he gave to him, that however warm the people might be, the ministry would prove cold. And the Count confided to his agent in Spain, the Marquis d'Ossun, his secret belief that the colonies were only playing off a proposed monopoly of their trade as a game by which to rouse the British jealousy of France, and thus wring from the mother country a surrender of independence.[1] A week later he had succeeded in sounding the commissioners so far as to see that closer obligations could be obtained. The colonies would consent to guarantee the safety of the West India Islands, and to pledge themselves not to make a peace separate from France. But it was to be remembered *that the promises of republics were of little force, when against their interests, and not to be relied upon like the obligations of honor in monarchs.*[2] These hints, which are found scattered in the confidential dis-

[1] Letter to the Marquis d'Ossun, 6 January, 1777.

[2] Letter to the same, 12 January, 1777. In these sentiments, the Count departs widely from the ideas of Machiavel, who devotes a chapter to the proof of the contrary. *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di T. Livio*, lib. 1. c. lix.

patches of the French minister, are of the utmost consequence to a right comprehension of the current of all the later negotiations.

Congress, finding that the original propositions had not been warmly received by France, showed themselves quite ready to sanction new ones more likely to conciliate her. They were not aware that they had already touched a chord which was vibrating more forcibly than any other within their reach. They had directed their commissioners to say, that, without some explicit declaration of France in their favor, they could not answer for it that some reunion with the mother country would not, in time, be possible, perhaps unavoidable. This suggestion, fortified by the fear of Lord Chatham's return to power, and the knowledge of the awkward efforts at reconciliation that were perpetually making by Great Britain, seems to have led to the adoption by the somewhat reluctant monarch of a paper read to him by Count de Vergennes on the 23d of July, 1777, which recommended a more active interference in the dispute.

This paper is most remarkable for the manner in which it meets the objection then commonly raised, that France was creating a power which might in the end become formidable to herself. The Count regarded this fear as chimerical for two reasons. First, the clashing of interests, incidental to such a combination of distinct communities as that of the American States, would always be an obstacle to their rapid growth; and, secondly, if that cause should not be sufficient to check them, a more effective one would gnaw into their prosperity, with the introduction of the vices of Europe. And should neither of these avail, there was left one yet more powerful resource in the retention of Canada, and the adjacent territories on the north, in the hands of Great Britain. The ingenuousness of these cool calculations of misfortunes and disasters to people, whom it was the ostensible purpose to befriend, is not more to be observed than the sagacity thus far developed in making the predictions. But, at any rate, they show most unmistakably the nature of the sentiments entertained. Later events only prove that the policy thus marked out was rigidly adhered to in action. No inducements could be held out strong enough ever to procure any coöperation towards the conquest of Canada. That thorn in the flesh of the colonists, the irritating nature of

which the French had too well understood whilst they had the power to use it themselves, was yet to remain to be applied with still more malignant hand by the vengeful spirit of Britain defeated and defied.

All lingering doubts of the permanence of the breach were swept away by the capture of Burgoyne. It was exactly the opportunity for which the French ministry had been watching. They immediately improved it by executing a treaty of commerce, and a treaty of alliance offensive and defensive, contingent upon what was forescen as inevitable, a British declaration of war.

The other intervening events prior to the establishment of Mr. Adams in his commission with powers to treat with Great Britain both on peace and commerce, have been sufficiently described. It has been shown that the addition of commerce had not been contemplated by the French cabinet in their original plan, and that it was an accidental and unwelcome effect of their success in expunging from the instructions of the minister for peace, conditions deemed likely to stand in the way of a general pacification. Originating with persons designated by his minister, M. Gérard, as secret Tory adherents to Great Britain, it was natural that the suspicions entertained by de Vergennes of the measure, as an entering wedge to reconciliation, should revive. Believing in the possibility that the mother country might, for the sake of perpetuating a commercial monopoly in her own hands, as well as preventing it from falling into those of France, be willing so far to sacrifice her pride as to concede to the colonies the main point of independence; foreseeing likewise the contingency in which France might become the scapegoat of this reconciliation, in case the promises of republican, and therefore uncertain allies should not be proof against the temptation of interest, it was very natural that the proposition of Mr. Adams to open a way to the knowledge of his powers by the British government, should be received by him with the coldest form of rejection. He saw that the treaty of alliance did not absolutely forbid such a step. He was well aware of the general affinities of Mr. Adams with his namesake and the Lees, whom he had been taught to distrust. He had had reason to know Mr. Adams's kind feeling towards Arthur Lee, of whose relation with Lord Shelburne he had entertained

such doubts as to set spies over the minutest actions of his secretary, when sent by Lee to England. All these considerations, backed by a distrust of his power to control Mr. Adams, prompted him at once to put an end to the chances of difficulty by insisting upon the withholding of all knowledge of the second commission from the British government, and, in the mean time, setting in motion in America an agency to procure from congress its revocation. Meanwhile Mr. Adams, in his other capacity, was politely received, and officially acknowledged, in language remarkably guarded, as designated *to assist* at the conferences for peace whenever they might take place. The caution which dictated the use of this phrase, will be explained in a later stage of the negotiations.

The question proposed to Count de Vergennes having been answered, Mr. Adams contented himself with transmitting copies of the correspondence to congress, not suppressing his own opinion, but submitting with cheerfulness to be overruled. Although without official duties, it was no part of his theory of life to waste time in idleness, if there was a possibility even in a remote form to do something that might be of service to his country. He saw that the people on the continent of Europe were, for the most part, as indeed they yet remain to a surprising degree, unacquainted with the history and resources of the United States, and the merits of their dispute with Great Britain; and that such information as occasionally reached them was received through English sources, by no means to be depended upon, then or since, for their freedom from prejudice and passion. In order to remedy this evil, he directed his labors to the preparation of papers, containing facts and arguments bearing on the American side of the question, for which he obtained currency through the pages of a semi-official magazine, the *Mercure de France*, conducted under the eye of government, by M. Genet, one of the chief secretaries in the foreign bureau. With this gentleman, the father of the individual afterwards so troublesome to General Washington's administration, as well as of the lady whose narrative of the domestic life of the fated royal pair has excited so much interest in later times, Madame Campan, he established the most friendly relations. By this channel he hoped to facilitate the diffusion of better notions in the popular mind, without the

necessity of annoying the minister by communications necessarily deprived of an official character. The Count, however, learning from his deputy the sources of his information, perhaps not quite liking the connection, showed himself not disinclined to become the direct recipient of it. He instructed M. Genet to assure Mr. Adams that it would always give him pleasure to be supplied by him with intelligence from good sources touching American affairs. This invitation was in some sense equivalent to a direction. Mr. Adams complied with it very readily by furnishing from this time such extracts from private letters and newspapers received from the United States as he thought likely to be acceptable. They were received with thankfulness, and acknowledged with solicitations for more. The minister continued to court this channel of communication until an incident occurred which gave a wholly opposite turn to his mind. He then thought fit to construe as officious the very practice which he had himself originated, and continued so long as it lasted. As this matter has been much misrepresented, and as it had important effects on the later course of Mr. Adams, it is necessary to explain it still more particularly.

Among the communications consequent on this invitation, was one made on the 16th of June, 1780, of an extract of a letter from Mr. Adams's brother-in-law, Richard Cranch, then a member of the senate of Massachusetts, in which he announced the adoption by that State of a recommendation from the Continental Congress to redeem the continental emissions of paper at the rate of forty dollars for one in silver. This was a little more than one half of the rate of depreciation, at which the bills were actually circulating. In order to meet the charge incurred by this effort, it was added that a tax had been laid, estimated to be sufficient to provide for the share of Massachusetts in the whole emission, in the course of about seven years. Four days later, another packet was sent, which contained a copious extract of a letter written by Mr. Gerry, then a member of the congressional treasury board, explaining the reasons of this movement, as well as of the resolution to pay off the continental loan certificates, according to the value of money at the time they were issued. It was only in the note covering the last of these two papers that Mr. Adams expressed any opinion of his own touching these transactions, and in that he confined

himself to the explanation of a distinction between the action of congress on the paper money and on the loan certificates, which that body had neglected to make clear, but which he deemed likely to relieve anxiety in the minds of many, if not all, of the French creditors.

Before the reception of the last extract, and before a word of comment had reached him, Count de Vergennes, who had probably been stimulated by the alarm of some of these creditors, volunteered a reply, though he knew Mr. Adams to be in no way accredited to the court of France, in which he entered into a discussion of the act of congress in question, complained of its injustice to French citizens, and called upon him, upon whom he had no official claim, to use his endeavors to effect a retraction of it by congress, at least so far as to exempt the subjects of France from its operation.

This detail is important, because, in many accounts of these times, Mr. Adams is spoken of as having volunteered a controversy with the French minister, to whom he held no diplomatic relations, a charge to which Count de Vergennes himself gave countenance, when he found some mode of extrication necessary from the embarrassment into which he had incautiously plunged. The facts are, then, that Mr. Adams had been first solicited to furnish the minister with private information, from authentic sources, of what was going on in America; that he had complied from time to time for two months, during which his communications were received with thanks; and that, in doing so, he had seldom ventured the addition of any opinion of his own, up to the date of the argumentative paper addressed to him by the Count himself, complaining of the conduct of the American congress, and requesting him to interfere to effect a change of their policy. This imprudence, which unquestionably that wary minister would never have committed in the face of any representative of the European powers, imposed upon Mr. Adams a delicate responsibility. If he should say nothing at all, his silence might be susceptible of misinterpretation, not less by the minister, who, besides asking for his coöperation, had apprised him of the direct efforts he was about to make at Philadelphia, through his own envoy, M. de la Luzerne, than by congress itself, which might construe it as equivalent to indifference in his duty to them, if not disapprobation of their course.

If, on the other hand, he should make any reply, he could not, in giving his reasons for declining the Count's request, very well escape justifying the action of his government against the charges of bad faith which the Count had not scrupled to insinuate. In truth, Mr. Adams regarded the measure as in itself a wise one, demanded by the necessities of the country, and not really working injustice to the French creditors, to protect whose interests the Count had felt it his duty to interfere. He, therefore, determined upon the preparation of an elaborate paper, explanatory of the situation of the American finances, of the effect of the depreciation of their paper, and of the impossibility of making any such reservations or distinctions as were desired, without working far more injustice than it was likely to correct. In reality, the Count was demanding for French creditors, whose contracts had been all more or less graduated to the current depreciation, to be paid beyond what was equitably their due. This paper, bearing date the 22d of June, though probably sent a few days later, may be found in its proper place in the part of this work devoted to the official correspondence.[1] The force of the argument was calculated to apprise the minister of the mistake he had committed, as well as of the spirit of the person with whom he had to deal. He replied by a note, waving further discussion of the merits of the question, and intimating that for the future he should address his remonstrances directly to Philadelphia, where he doubted not that the congress would manifest a far greater *preference* for France over other nations than seemed to be in the disposition of Mr. Adams. The idea of obligation, as the corollary of dependence, is scarcely veiled even by the usual forms of diplomatic politeness. Whether Count de Vergennes actually expected submission from America, cannot be determined. If he did, he was destined to be disappointed. For congress, to whom Mr. Adams regularly transmitted copies of his correspondence, instead of retreating from their position, deliberately confirmed it, by adopting, on the 12th of December, 1780, an order, formally instructing their committee of foreign affairs "to inform Mr. Adams of the satisfaction which they receive from his industrious attention to the interests and honor

[1] Vol. vi. p. 193.

of these United States abroad, especially in the transactions communicated to them by his letter."

One other point must be explained in order to make this narrative complete, and to connect it with subsequent events. Mr. Adams, upon learning from the first letter of Count de Vergennes the nature of the orders to be transmitted to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, far from volunteering any direct address to him, wrote a note to Dr. Franklin, as the accredited minister, stating the intention of the Count, and suggesting to him the expediency of requesting a suspension of the orders at least so long as to furnish an opportunity to show that they were founded in misconception of the facts. This Dr. Franklin probably did, on the 24th of June, in a letter which does not appear to have been published either in the official collection or in any edition of his writings. Count de Vergennes, in acknowledging it six days later, not only declined, with some haughtiness, the request, but, changing his demand of indemnity into an appeal to the gratitude of America for the king's goodness, called on Franklin to side with him. He further requested that copies of the correspondence should be forwarded to congress by him, fortified by an expression of his disapproval of Mr. Adams's reasoning. Compelled by this request to take some part, and perhaps a little piqued that Mr. Adams should have acted without consulting him, yet taking no trouble to inquire concerning the origin of the correspondence, Dr. Franklin at once disavowed all disposition to uphold Mr. Adams's defence of congress, and expressed to the Count his full conviction that that body would, when applied to, at once retrace their steps in favor of the French creditors, at the expense of the Americans.[1] Yet he dexterously evaded the duty which the Count had requested him to undertake, of reinforcing his representations to Philadelphia, for the reason that it was needless. On the other hand, he wrote to congress, saying not one word upon the merits of the controversy, which he had declared himself to De Vergennes as not able to understand,[2] but complaining of Mr. Adams's course as an interference with

[1] B. Franklin to Count de Vergennes, 10 July, 1780. The case is put hypothetically, it is true, but the moral abandonment of the position of congress is just the same as if it had been directly stated.

[2] Surely, Dr. Franklin's powerful mind was fully competent at least to form an opinion upon the clear reasoning of Mr. Adams.

his province, signifying a fundamental disagreement with him in his views of the policy to be observed towards France, and slyly insinuating the expediency of not having more than one minister at the French court. In this letter[1] he omitted to insert any such confident opinion of what congress would do, as that expressed in his letter to the Count, nor did he take care to furnish Mr. Adams himself with a copy of the representation of his conduct, which he had felt it his duty to make. He contented himself with incidentally mentioning, two months afterwards, in a letter[2] sent by the hands of Mr. Searle to Mr. Adams at Amsterdam, the fact that he had received and forwarded to congress the complaints Count de Vergennes had made of passages, in others of his letters written later, which he also was sorry to see, and adding that, as the vessel had not yet gone which carried the papers, there was still a chance open to him to send some explanations or apology which *might efface the impressions made by them.* Even this notice must have been delayed in Mr. Searle's travels, as no acknowledgment of it occurred until after the lapse of nearly two months more, when, in a reply on other subjects, Mr. Adams contented himself with making this brief allusion to it:—

"The correspondence you mention, I transmitted regularly to congress in the season of it, from Paris, and other copies since my arrival in Amsterdam, both without any comments."

But although Mr. Adams had been left so long unaware of the attack made upon him by Count de Vergennes, and sustained by the representations of Dr. Franklin, fortunately for him he had in congress watchful friends, not disposed to permit him to be sacrificed to the French minister, and strong enough to prevent it. The issue of the experiment was the formal vote of approbation which has already been given. Not long afterwards, Mr. Adams received from them hints of the movement that had been made, and extracts from the letters of De Vergennes and Franklin. It can be no cause of surprise that he should have augured ill of the policy of the French court, so little disposed to tolerate in an American a frank exchange

[1] B. Franklin to the President of Congress, 9 August, 1780.

[2] B. Franklin to John Adams, 8 October, 1780, in the 7th volume of the present work, p. 314. It is not either in the *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Revolution*, or in the editions of Franklin's works.

of opinion even upon a topic of secondary importance. Nor yet was the lesson of what he had to expect from Dr. Franklin wholly thrown away. He was to be treated by France as Arthur Lee had been, without a particle of sympathy from him either as a colleague, representing a common country, or a co-adjutor in a common cause. The ethics of Franklin permitted of the enjoyment of advantages, obtained at the expense of others, that might come by passively permitting them to happen or even by indirectly promoting them. Through the attractive benevolence which overspreads his writings, is visible a shade of thrift seldom insensible to the profit side of the account, in even the best actions. He is the embodiment of one great class of New England character, as well in his virtues as defects. And unluckily the lustre reflected from the virtues has done a little too much to dazzle the eyes of his countrymen, naturally delighting in his well-earned fame, and prevent all scrutiny of the more doubtful qualities. Yet if rigid moral analysis be not the purpose of historical writing, there is no more value in it than in the fictions of mythological antiquity. The errors of Franklin's theory of life may be detected almost anywhere in his familiar compositions. They sprang from a defective early education, which made his morality superficial even to laxness, and undermined his religious faith.[1] His system resolves itself into the ancient and specious dogma, of *honesty the best policy*. That nice sense which revolts at wrong for its own sake, and that generosity of spirit which shrinks from participating in the advantages of indirection, however naturally obtained, were not his. If they had been, he would scarcely have consented to become the instrument to transmit the stolen letters of Hutchinson and others to Massachusetts, neither could he have been tempted to write the confession of Polly Baker, still less to betray the levity of such a reason as he gave for disseminating its unworthy sophistry in print.[2]

[1] That is, the living principle that infuses itself into the essence of a man's character. It is not mere benevolence, though, in the popular mind, the two ideas are often confounded. On this subject some pure light may be obtained from an analysis in the North American Review, ascribed to a capable and impartial judge, the late Professor Andrews Norton. Vol. vii. pp. 289–300.

[2] *Writings of Jefferson*, edited by H. A. Washington. Vol. viii. p. 502.

It should be remembered, that though the act was done in youth, the reason was assigned in advanced age.

These are defects in the life of that great man which it is not wise to palliate or to excuse. They cannot be overlooked in any examination of his personal relations with his contemporaries, pretending to be faithful. It was the sense of the constant presence of what the French call an *arrière pensée*, which rendered even his taciturnity oppressive to straightforward, outspoken men. Of this class was John Adams, habitually pushing his conversation beyond the line approved by his calmer judgment, and rarely restraining himself to conceal his thoughts The mental reserves and the calm exterior of the one, and the talkativeness, often carried to indiscretion, with the quick temper, of the other, mingled no better than oil and water. It naturally followed that they sympathized but little, and each in his way was annoying to his associate. Yet it does not appear that any thing had occurred between them before the discovery of this letter of the 9th of August, to effect a serious change in Mr. Adams's feelings towards his distinguished countryman.[1]

Neither was the result of this experience calculated to enlarge personal confidence in Count de Vergennes. Mr. Adams now began to entertain those suspicions of his sincerity, which one of his own colleagues in the cabinet, in the portrait of him which he has given to the world with no unfriendly hand, affirms to have been the natural effect of his intercourse with all the representatives of foreign nations who were called to have relations with him.[2] On the other hand, the Count unexpectedly discovered in Mr. Adams a tendency to think for himself and a reliance on his own judgment, which augured unfavorably to the power over the joint policy of the two countries, which he wished

[1] These remarks have not been made without a careful study of the characters of both these prominent men, and an endeavor to lay aside every consideration of a secondary nature, in the search after truth. Mr. Adams's own views of this letter of the 9th of August, and of his relations with Dr. Franklin, have been so fully given by himself in the course of his publications made in the Boston Patriot, that further direct notice of them may be dispensed with. The extract in the Appendix to the present volume (B) contains a full statement of his side of the question.

[2] Si l'on se permit de lui faire quelques reproches, le plus fondé m'a toujours paru être de ne pouvoir inspirer la confiance, et d'avoir, sous des dehors très simples, conservé un air d'adresse et de souplesse, qui pouvait faire douter de la franchise de son caractère, et devait mettre en défiance les ministres étrangers qui eurent à traiter avec lui.

Mémoires de M. le Prince de Montbarey, tom. ii. p. 114.

to retain as much as possible within his own control. Neither did matters long rest here. Other causes of difference soon arose. Mr. Adams was not permitted by him to leave Paris as he desired, and go to Holland, as the issue of the attempts at a pacification in Spain was not yet wholly determined. Once more he felt it his duty to submit to the Count some reasons for thinking that a disclosure of his powers to treat with Great Britain on commerce might be of use. Not that he anticipated any favorable answer from the existing ministry, so much as a reinforcement of the popular discontents now rapidly becoming so great, on account of the disasters of the war, as to threaten a change. But an appeal of this kind had no charms to recommend it to Count de Vergennes. The Gordon riots and the county meetings were not, in his mind, so favorable grounds for calculating the policy of England, even as the singular mission of Richard Cumberland to Madrid. A change of ministry might lead to the very evils he most feared. He regarded the holding out advantages of trade as useless and perhaps worse. They might open a way to a negotiation justifying the minister's deep-seated dread of what he called the isolation of the United States at the cost of France. That the independence of the United States should be obtained in any other way than through him, would defeat his policy. Hence the answer to Mr. Adams's reasoning was not only decided but harsh. Taking his propositions paragraph by paragraph, Count de Vergennes commented on them all, and, not content with applying an absolute negative upon all action, he enforced it with a separate note distinctly threatening a direct appeal from his sovereign to congress, in case Mr. Adams should think of disobeying the injunction to keep silence.

The earnestness of this menace was scarcely necessary. Neither was it in keeping with the declaration that the measure in question was simply useless. If a mere work of supererogation, where was the need of so vehement a remonstrance, and so strong a personal threat, to deter from it? For it should be remarked that not an intimation had been given of any intention to persist in acting against the Count's opinion, so that this intimidating style was gratuitously offensive. It would scarcely have been used to the representative even of a second-rate power of Europe. It sprung from impatience at what he

considered the needless obstacles an obstinate American was putting in his way. A course of conciliation and confidence might have cost a little more trouble, but it would have been far more successful. Mr. Adams was the last man to whom threats could carry persuasion. His spirit could not brook the idea that he was to sink into a merely passive instrument of a foreign chief, who might measure the best interests of America only by a standard accommodated to those of Europe. Yet he replied with great moderation, in a letter, which, as setting forth his peculiar ideas, has been reserved for this place.

TO THE COUNT DE VERGENNES.

Paris, 26 July, 1780.

Sir, — I have received the letter, which your Excellency did me the honor to write me on the 25th of this month.

The sincere respect I entertain for your Excellency's sentiments would have determined me, upon the least intimation, to have communicated my letter and your answer to congress, and to suspend, until I should receive orders on their part, all measures towards the British ministry, without your Excellency's requisition in the name of the king.

I shall transmit these papers to congress, and I doubt not the reasons your Excellency has adduced will be sufficient to induce them to suspend any communication to the British ministry, as it is undoubtedly their wisdom to conduct all such measures in concert with their allies.

There is a great body of people in America, as determined as any to support their independence and their alliances, who notwithstanding wish that no measure may be left unattempted by congress or their servants, to manifest their readiness for peace, upon such terms as they think honorable and advantageous to all parties. Your Excellency's arguments, or indeed your authority, will probably be sufficient to satisfy these people, and to justify me, whereas, without them, I might have been liable to the censure of numbers. For it is most certain, that all due deference will be shown by the people of the United States and their servants, both in and out of congress, to the sentiments of the ministry of France.

This deference, however, by no means extends so far as to

agree in all cases to those sentiments without examination. I cannot, therefore, agree in the sentiment, that proposing a treaty of peace and commerce is discovering a great deal of weakness, or that the Americans have forgotten the British system of tyranny, cruelty, or perfidy, or to invite her to believe the Americans have an irresistible predilection for England, or to fortify her in the opinion that the American patriots will submit through weariness, or through fear of the preponderant influence of the Tories.

And so far from thinking it would give credit to the opinion, if there be such a one in all Europe, that the United States incline towards a defection, and that they will not be faithful to their engagements, it seems to me, on the contrary, it would discredit the opinion which prevails too much in Europe, that there is some secret treaty between France and the United States, by which the former is entitled to exclusive privileges in the American trade.

It is very true, that the independence of America must be acknowledged before a treaty of peace can be made. But a prospect of a free trade with America, upon principles of perfect equality and reciprocity, like that between France and the United States, might be a powerful inducement with the people of England to acknowledge American independence. Indeed, I do not see any other considerable motive, that England can ever have to make that acknowledgment. The congress have given no positive instructions respecting the time or manner of making these powers known to one court or another. All this is left at discretion, and to a construction of the commissioners themselves. It is very certain that all the belligerent powers are busily occupied every winter in their councils, and preparations for the ensuing campaign. And it is also certain that the artifice of the British ministry, in holding up to view every winter some semblance of a design of reconciliation formerly, and of peace latterly, has been a real engine of hostility against America, equal to a considerable part of the British army. Neither the people of America, nor Mr. Adams, have the least dread upon their minds of an insolent answer from one of the British ministers, nor of the ridicule of those nations who have not yet acknowledged the independence of America. No man of any knowledge, justice, or humanity, in any of those nations,

would laugh upon such an occasion; on the contrary, he would feel a just indignation against a minister who should insult a message so obviously calculated for the good of England, and of all Europe, in the present circumstances of affairs.

I am very much mistaken, for I speak from memory, if the Duke of Richmond did not make a motion two years ago in the House of Lords, and if Mr. Hartley did not make another about a year ago, which was seconded by Lord North himself, in the House of Commons, tending to grant independence to America. And it is very certain that a great part of the people of England think that peace can be had upon no other terms. It is most clear that the present ministry will not grant independence; the only chance of obtaining it, is by change of that ministry. The king is so attached to that ministry that he will not change them, until it appears that they have so far lost the confidence of the people that their representatives in parliament dare no longer to support them, and in the course of the last winter the weight and sentiments of the people were so considerable as to bring many great questions nearly to a balance, and particularly to carry two votes, one against the increase of the influence of the crown, and another against the board of trade and plantations, a vote that seemed almost to decide the American question; and they came within a very few votes of deciding against the American secretary. Now, where parties are approaching so near to a balance, even a small weight, thrown into either scale, may turn it.

In my letter of the 19th of February, I said that my appointment was notorious in America, and that therefore it was probably known to the court of London, although they had not regular evidence of it. The question, then, was more particularly concerning a commission to assist in the pacification. This was published in the American newspapers, in a general way, but I have no reason to think they are particularly informed of these matters; if they were, no evil, that I am aware of, could result from giving them the information officially. Certainly they have no official information, and it is reported they deny that they know the nature of Mr. Adams's commission.

Without any great effort of genius, I think it is easy to demonstrate to any thinking being, that by granting American independence, and making a treaty of commerce upon principles

of perfect reciprocity, England would, in the present circumstances of affairs, make an honorable and an advantageous peace. It would have been more for their honor and advantage never to have made this war against America, it is true; but having made it, all the dishonor and disadvantage there is in it is indelible. And after thirteen colonies have been driven to throw off their government and annihilate it in every root and branch, becoming independent in fact, maintaining this independence against a force of sixty thousand men and fifty ships of war, that would have shaken most of the states of Europe to the very foundation, after maintaining this independence four years, and having made an honorable treaty with the first power in Europe, after another power had fallen into the war in consequence of the same system, after the voice of mankind had so far declared against the justice of their cause, that they can get no ally, but, on the contrary, all the maritime powers are entering into a confederacy against them, upon a point which has been a principal source of their naval superiority in Europe; if England consider further, that America is now known all over Europe to be such a magazine of raw materials for manufactures, such a nursery of seamen, and such a source of commerce and naval power, that it would be dangerous to all the maritime powers to suffer any one of them to establish a domination and a monopoly again in America; — in these circumstances, the only honorable part they can act, is to conform to the opinion of mankind; and the dishonorable and ruinous part for them to act, is to continue the war.

For the principle, that the people have a right to a form of government according to their own judgments and inclinations is, in this enlightened age, so well agreed on in the world, that it would be thought dishonorable by mankind in general for the English to govern three millions of people against their wills by military force; and this is all they can ever hope for, even supposing they could bribe and tempt deserters enough from our army and apostates from our cause to make it impossible for us to carry on the war. This, however, I know to be impossible, and that they never will get quiet possession again of the government of any one whole State in the thirteen; no, not for an hour.

I know there exists, in some European minds, a prejudice

against America, and a jealousy that she will be hurtful to Europe, and England may place some dependence upon this prejudice and jealousy; but the motions of the maritime powers begin to convince her, that this jealousy and prejudice do not run so deep as they thought, and surely there never was a more groundless prejudice entertained among men, and it must be dissipated as soon as the subject is considered.

America is a nation of husbandmen, planted on a vast continent of wild, uncultivated land; and there is, and will be for centuries, no way in which these people can get a living, and advance their interest so much as by agriculture. They can apply themselves to manufactures only to fill up intersticcs of time, in which they cannot labor on their lands, and to commerce only to carry the produce of their lands, the raw materials of manufactures, to the European market. Europe is a country, whose land is all cultivated nearly to perfection, where the people have no way to advance themselves but by manufactures and commerce. Here are two worlds, then, fitted by God and nature to benefit each other, one by furnishing raw materials, the other manufactures, and they can never interfere. The number of the States in America, their position and extension over such a great continent, and their fundamental constitution that nine States must concur to war, show that nine of these States never can agree in any foreign war, or any other war, but for self-defence, if they should ever become powerful. But in this case, however disagreeable a prospect it may open to Americans, Europe has an everlasting warranty against their becoming dangerous to her, in the nature of men, the nature of their governments, and their position towards one another.

All these circumstances serve to show, and the people of England begin to be sensible of it, that Europe will never suffer them to regain their domination and monopoly, even if they were able to extort a forced submission. In this situation, then, the only honorable and advantageous course for England is to make peace and open commerce with America, in perfect consistency with her independence and her alliances. The people of England cannot be said to furnish subsidies without murmuring, for it is certain there never was so much murmuring and such radical discontent, in that nation nor any other, but at the eve of a revolution.

I very cheerfully agree with your Excellency in opinion that the court of Spain has sagacity enough to penetrate and to defeat the deceitful designs of the English, and am not under other apprehensions from thence than that the report of a negotiation with Spain will leave some impressions in America, where I believe the English ministry chiefly intend it. I have already said that from the present British ministry I expect no peace. It is for the nation, and for the change of ministry, as a step towards peace, that I thought it might have some effect to make the communication, and to satisfy those people in America, who, without the most distant thought of departing from their independence or their alliances, wish still to take every reasonable measure towards peace. Your Excellency's letter will convince them that my apprehensions were wrong, and your advice will undoubtedly be followed, as it ought to be; for they cannot promise themselves any advantage from the communication, equivalent to the inconvenience of taking a measure of this kind separately, which ought to be done but in concert, against the opinion of the ministry of France.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

JOHN ADAMS.

On a calm review of the relations thus far established between these parties, it appears that Mr. Adams had not yet done a single act in France which was not either in the strict line of his duty, or else had been invited by the minister himself. There might have been an absence of the usual forms of courtesy expected by the habits of court society, and an uncommon tenacity in urging unwelcome opinions. But these deficiencies, admitting them to have existed, seem scarcely to excuse or justify the rough and dictatorial manner resorted to as a check upon them. The *tone* is that of a master. Mr. Adams, so far from being subdued, was only provoked by it. He was, therefore, led to further measures, the policy of which, however well meant, can scarcely be denominated prudent. Finding himself of no use in Paris, he determined upon going to Holland. He notified the Count of his design. After a detention of a week, waiting for intelligence from Spain, he was permitted to go. But it does not appear that the reason why he should be detained was ever communicated, or that any of the movements

attending Cumberland's attempt at a separate negotiation with Spain were made known to him. Yet indirectly they deeply involved the interests of America. Mr. Adams was not told that Count de Vergennes had proposed a long truce in lieu of an explicit recognition of independence, as a basis of pacification, although Franklin had been consulted and had acquiesced in it. In fact the French cabinet, under the representations of M. Necker, had become profoundly alarmed by the exhaustion of the finances caused by the war. To such an extent was this carried, that Count de Maurepas appears to have ventured, in the month of July, upon some overtures of peace to the British government, the urgent nature of which can be gathered only from the notice of them in a letter of George the Third to Lord North.[1] M. Necker's own secret letter, written some months later to Lord North, earnestly pressing for the truce, has now come to light.[2] And even Count de Vergennes himself, who had up to this season resisted Necker's tendencies, on the 27th of September admitted to the king[3] that "no resource was left to France but peace, and that as soon as possible." At no period during the whole struggle were the interests, if not the independence, of the United States in such danger of being compromised as at this time. Fortunately they were saved by the obstinacy of the British sovereign and the obtuseness of his ministers.

Wholly unconscious of this agitation deep beneath the surface, or of what was meditated by France, on the 27th of July, the day Mr. Adams took his departure from Paris, he did for the first time volunteer a letter, urging, in the strongest terms, a concentration of the naval power of France upon the American seas, as the most effective mode of deciding the fate of the war, as well as a conclusive proof to the people of America that France was *sincerely* enlisted in their cause. Vigorous as was his plan, and clear the argument, it may be doubted whether, under the circumstances, it would not have been wiser to have omitted this insinuation. It was open to the objection raised by Dr. Franklin, without foundation in the former case, of trenching upon his province, and it was likewise implying

[1] The King to Lord North, 31 July, 1780, in the Appendix to Brougham's *Statesmen of the Time of George the Third.*

[2] 1 December, 1780. It is found in the same Appendix.

[3] Quoted from the French archives, by Flassan, tom. vii. p. 364.

a distrust of the French intentions in conducting the war, which, if well founded, it was doing no good to expose. But Mr. Adams had no specific evidence on which to rest the intimation. He was not apprised of what was going on either in Spain or in Great Britain. Neither was he aware of the embarrassments under which Count de Vergennes was laboring from the demands of Spain upon the French navy. In point of fact, his stroke fell just at a moment when it reached more deeply than he had any idea of. It recommended additional exertions, when those already made were beginning to be intolerably burdensome. It urged a prosecution of the war when peace was the cherished thought. The consequence was a decided manifestation of indignation on the part of the Count, by including this letter as a new offence in his complaints to Dr. Franklin, by abruptly closing all avenues to the reception of any more, and by directing measures to be taken at Philadelphia to procure from congress the revocation, at least of one, and possibly of all, of the commissions which had been given to Mr. Adams. The result of these labors will be seen as the narrative proceeds.

The object of Mr. Adams's journey to Holland was to form an opinion for himself of the probability of obtaining assistance to America from the people of that country. After spending a fortnight at Amsterdam, and conversing with many persons respecting the chances of success in opening a loan, he was led to believe it far more feasible than the turn of events afterwards showed it to be. His opinion he communicated to congress in a letter to the President; but already, six weeks before this, a commission had been sent by congress to him, directing him, in the absence of Mr. Laurens, who had been designated for the duty, but had not yet undertaken it, to make the attempt. Before it arrived, he had already set himself with energy to a preliminary work. He had been strongly impressed with the necessity of disseminating correct information about America. This had led him in Paris to make the exertions through the agency of M. Genet, which have been already alluded to. But when he found himself in Amsterdam, free from the restraints imposed by the French government, and the risk of being regarded as officious by Dr. Franklin, he lost no time in forming connections by which to act upon the public mind in Holland. That country was rich in money, which it was in the habit

of freely lending to other nations. But the capitalists were too cautious and shrewd to hazard their funds without having a clear notion of the securities for repayment. The ignorance of the true condition and resources of the United States, of the character of the people and their institutions, was profound and universal. What little intelligence had come to Holland, had been supplied by the English influence then in the ascendant in the government, and was colored by its habitual contempt of the colonial dependencies, and by the vindictive passions elicited by the war. In order to begin a counteraction of this overbearing influence, Mr. Adams sought the acquaintance of literary men and publishers of leading gazettes, quite as much as of the bankers and burgomasters of the town. Among them, the persons with whom he established the most permanent and valuable relations were John Luzac, conductor of the Gazette at Leyden, and Cerisier, who set on foot a magazine entitled the *Politique Hollandais*. Through the openings thus made, he set before the Dutch nation an abridged French translation of Governor Pownall's "Memorial to the Sovereigns of Europe," which he justly regarded as effective testimony from a good quarter to the character of the Americans, and likewise translations of the narratives of Generals Howe and Burgoyne, calculated, as coming from enemies, to give a strong impression of their means of resistance. At the same time, through an American friend at Brussels, he obtained the publication, in a London journal, of many articles, drawn up by himself, and furnishing correct views of American events, which he procured to be republished in the Leyden Gazette, and read with the character of English news.

In addition to this he ventured upon a direct publication of his own, which had its origin in a conversation at a dinner table, with a distinguished lawyer of Amsterdam. It seems that this gentleman, by the name of Calkoen, took the opportunity to address to him a series of questions, involving all the principal points of inquiry touching the history of the people of the United States, their character, and their ability to maintain their stand. But inasmuch as both parties experienced some embarrassment from the want of a common language to explain their meaning so fully as they wished, and as it occurred to Mr. Adams that the information which Mr. Calkoen had sought to

obtain would be likely to be useful to many Dutch people, he procured the questions committed to writing, so that he might append a brief but clear answer to each in its order, and give the whole to the press, for the public information. This was accordingly done. Mr. Calkoen was so much pleased with the result, that he not only took pains to communicate the knowledge of it to his circle of acquaintance, but he drew a parallel between the American Revolution and the revolt of the Low Countries, admirably adapted to enlist the sympathies of his countrymen, already excited by the events of the pending struggle. Mr. Adams's work has been repeatedly published under the title of "Twenty-six Letters upon interesting subjects respecting the Revolution of America," and is now inserted in the seventh volume of the present collection. A slight examination of it is sufficient to show how exactly it was adapted to supply the wants of the time, and of the place where it was composed, and even at this day it may often be usefully consulted for information in few words as to the events of that period, which can only be obtained by scattered investigations elsewhere.

The reception of the powers to open a loan in the absence of Mr. Laurens, was the signal for Mr. Adams to turn his efforts in that direction. He immediately set about inquiries of the leading brokers in Amsterdam, as to the probability of obtaining the aid of influential houses to effect the object. Whether he could have succeeded, had no adverse circumstances interposed, is doubtful, to say the least. At any rate, the opportunity to know was denied him. Scarcely had he entered on his task, before the news arrived of the capture of Mr. Laurens, and of the discovery of secret papers in his possession, likely to involve Holland in difficulty with Great Britain. The panic among the moneyed men was extreme. A copy had been found of a project of a treaty drawn up between William Lee and M. Van Berckel, the first pensionary of Amsterdam, under the instigation of John de Neufville, a merchant of some activity and influence, neither of them having any authority to negotiate. The British ministry snatched at this as an occasion for the most uncompromising reclamations. As if eager to pounce upon what remained of the decaying commerce of Holland, scarcely an opening was left to her for the possibility of

retreat. The States, greatly alarmed, disavowed with earnestness all complicity with the movement of Amsterdam. Not a merchant or banker in the place, of any influence, would venture at such a moment even to appear to know that a person, suspected of being an American agent, was at hand. Fortunately for Mr. Adams, the tone of Great Britain helped him out of his difficulty. So dictatorial was it, as to leave little choice to the wavering Dutchmen between prostration and resistance. For the former they were not yet quite prepared. This was the moment when the influence of France, which had been for some time rising in the councils of that country, was of use to hold up their dubious courage, and with it came the feeling which ultimately enabled Mr. Adams to succeed in his undertaking. But that did not happen for some time. At present, it is enough to say that all thoughts of effecting the desired object were to be laid aside. Yet the labors which Mr. Adams had expended, had not been entirely lost. For he had succeeded in forming connections with a number of active political men and merchants, which, though remaining in abeyance whilst the panic continued, did not fail materially to aid him at the time when concealment ceased to be of use.

During this period, the efforts which Count de Vergennes had threatened to make at Philadelphia against the influence of Mr. Adams, through his minister, the Chevalier de la Luzerne, had been directed with some skill, but with no very marked success. The indiscretion of M. Gérard had fixed deep in the minds of the New England men, whom he had stigmatized for their resistance to his wishes, a suspicion of the motives of France in her conduct of the war, had weakened their confidence in Dr. Franklin, whom they thought too much under the influence of Count de Vergennes, and had confirmed their determination to adhere to Mr. Adams the more stiffly for the very opposition displayed to him. As a consequence, M. de la Luzerne could obtain no concession from congress beyond the passage of a resolution in the mildest terms, intimating to Mr. Adams their concurrence in the Count's view of the inexpediency of communicating to the court of Great Britain the knowledge of his powers to treat of commerce. Neither did this pass, before new commissions had been showered upon him by the same body. On the 1st of January, 1781, the President transmitted to him

the necessary authority to appear as minister plenipotentiary to the United Provinces, with instructions to negotiate a treaty of alliance whenever such a measure should become practicable. This was in the place of Henry Laurens, then held a prisoner in the Tower of London. At the same time another commission was passed, conferring on him authority to sign the Armed Neutrality, then looming up as an important combination, in conjunction with any or all of the northern powers. In truth, the abounding activity of Mr. Adams was far more in unison with the temper of the majority than the repose of Dr. Franklin, with which they were so much dissatisfied as to initiate a special mission in the person of Colonel John Laurens to enforce upon the government of France their urgent need of further pecuniary aid.

No sooner had his new powers reached the hands of Mr. Adams, than he entered upon measures to carry them into effect. He at once drew up and presented a memorial to the States General, announcing himself as authorized on the part of the United States to give in their accession to the Armed Neutrality, and he sent a formal notice of the same to the ministers of France, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, at the Hague, as well as to M. Van Berckel, the first pensionary of Amsterdam. Not many weeks afterwards, he determined upon the bolder step of presenting to the States General another memorial, directly soliciting to be recognized as minister plenipotentiary of an independent sovereignty. In both these acts he ventured to proceed upon his own responsibility; for the Duke de la Vauguyon, France's minister at the Hague, whom he consulted, held out little encouragement, and Count de Vergennes once more appealed to congress to check him, recommending this time that he should be put under the instructions of Dr. Franklin. France had no inclination to precipitate Holland into a situation, in which she might become an additional burden in the war, and a new party to consult in the event of a pacification. What was likely to be of use to the United States, by introducing them more firmly into the recognized family of nations, was of little moment to her, who trusted to accomplish her sole aim, the disruption of the British empire, without the aid of any European power except Spain. Hence it became obvious to Mr. Adams, that if any thing was to be

done at all, he must rely upon his own energy much more than the coöperation of France. Nor yet was the lesson of caution unheeded by him, who knew the probable consequence to himself of any failure of success. He took no step without full consultation with shrewd men on whom he could rely. Inasmuch as the Stadtholder and his friends were known to be in the interests of Great Britain, it was natural that he should form his relations with the leaders of the opposition. The influence of the court party had been considerably reduced by the unpopularity of Louis of Brunswick, whose power with the Stadtholder was regarded as supreme. And the old popular sympathies, though weakened by the progress of wealth and corruption, retained enough of their energy to associate numbers in resistance to the authority of the favorite, and in aid of the semblance, at least, if not the reality, of liberty. Hence the growth of the patriots at this time, and the natural intimacy with them of Mr. Adams. Moreover, the prospects held out of a new avenue for the declining trade of the country had their effect upon the merchants and manufacturers of the largest and most influential towns. It was with the advice of some of the leaders among these classes, that Mr. Adams ventured upon the presentation of his memorial. Guided by them, he caused it to be translated into two languages, published in various forms, and disseminated as freely as possible throughout the provinces. It was in the nature of an appeal to the popular feeling against the known tendencies of the government. Its effect, which proved important in the end, was not at first perceptible. The States General received it with their customary form, *ad referendum;* in other words, to refer it to the particular constituencies. An interval followed, in which no progress appeared to be made. But the elements were nevertheless silently working, which brought about, in course of time, the most gratifying success.

In the midst of these labors, a notice came from Count de Vergennes, that Mr. Adams was wanted in Paris. The causes of this summons were utterly unknown to him, for he had not been kept informed of the diplomatic movements in Europe, even though, in fact, they were turning upon the question of the position of the United States, and his own, as their representative. He nevertheless obeyed it at once, and reached Paris on the 6th of July, 1781.

The communications then made to him, although not by any means unreserved, nor calculated to give him the mastery of the complicated negotiations which had gone before, were yet sufficient to impose upon him the necessity of reflecting deeply upon his peculiar line of duty before proceeding further. For the better comprehension of the subject, it will be necessary to go back and take up the thread of the transactions, at the point where it was dropped, when Mr. Adams, in July of the preceding year, left Paris to go to Holland.

So early as 1778, when, at the suggestion of the British government, Spain made repeated offers of mediation between Great Britain and France, in which offers the mission of Mr. Adams had its source, Count de Vergennes drew up a memoir embracing the propositions, which, in his judgment, might be accepted as a basis for a pacification. It is in this paper that is to be found the acquiescence in the Spanish suggestion of a truce for a term of years between the mother country and her colonies, after it had been assented to by Dr. Franklin,[1] then sole minister at Paris, but which had not been made known to Mr. Adams, when he entered upon his new office of negotiator in the contingency of a peace. This proposal, which had not then met with any favor from Great Britain, revolted at the smallest indication of the interposition of France between her and her colonies, had been nevertheless revived upon the occasion of Mr. Cumberland's fruitless mission, still, however, without any communication of the fact to Mr. Adams. But in the latter case, Spain had ventured, without the privity and against the opinion of France, to connect with it the well-known principle of *uti possidetis* as a basis of negotiation, which materially contributed still further to entangle its details, already sufficiently intricate. Mr. Cumberland's mission seems to have been shipwrecked, at its outset, on the question, whether the surrender of Gibraltar should be permitted to enter into the negotiation; and the ministry, which never relied on its success, or on the sincerity of Spain, abandoned it for the better-founded prospect held out by the offers obtained from the powers of Austria and of Russia. These offers, after some delays, occasioned by the unreasonable British demand of a dissolution of the alliance

[1] Sevelinges's Introduction to the French Translation of Botta's History. Tom. i. p. 34.

between France and the United States, as a first step, assumed the shape of four articles, which were transmitted in a circular, directed to their respective envoys at Madrid, Paris, and London, with instructions to lay them before those courts as a suitable basis of negotiation for the reëstablishment of peace. It was the necessity of replying to them, which made the occasion for calling Mr. Adams to Paris. The answers of Spain and France were already in preparation, and now it became necessary to communicate the facts to the American commissioner, so far as to settle the relation which the United States were to hold to the entire proceeding. Was he to be regarded as a person clothed with diplomatic powers, authorizing him to claim a place as representative of a sovereign nation to treat with Great Britain in the congress which might be assembled under this mediation? Or was he to be considered merely as an agent, to watch over the interests of those he might represent, according as it might suit the other powers to construe them as sovereign or not? It was obvious that upon the determination of this question one way or the other, would depend the chance of making out of this opening a road to negotiation.

But Mr. Adams, though about to be consulted, had been hitherto kept entirely in the dark respecting the movements here described. He knew nothing of the answer, preparing on the part of France, nor was he aware of the dispatch which Count de Vergennes had transmitted to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, as long ago as the 9th of March preceding, proposing that congress should strip him of all discretion in the negotiation, and should direct him to take his orders implicitly from himself, even though those orders might go the length of a concession of geographical limits, of the substitution of a truce for recognized independence, of a surrender of the navigation of the Mississippi, of the fisheries, and, even in the last resort, of a consent to the basis of *uti possidetis* itself. All that was told him was limited to three articles, separated from the fourth, a material one to him, and also from the context of the proposal, made by the mediating powers; to a communication, for the first time, of the project of a truce; and to the ambiguous intimations of Count de Vergennes and of his secretary, de Rayneval, respecting the necessity of defining his position. These things, taken together and viewed from this distance

of time, are all sufficiently intelligible to make the question of what should have been the response on the part of an American minister, one of little difficulty to determine. But Mr. Adams was permitted to see but a very small corner of the picture, nor had he much time to study even that. Yet he decided at once; and with the instinctive sagacity which marks his whole career, his decision was right.

It is essential, however, that this view of the policy of Count de Vergennes should not be misunderstood. It is not meant that, in asking of the United States so wide a latitude of discretion in sacrificing their dearest rights, he was actuated by any wish to make the sacrifices contemplated. In all probability, it would have pleased him better to avoid them. But he felt himself surrounded by difficulties. The war had become very burdensome. France had been drawn in, by the necessity of sustaining the Americans, to make advances far beyond the original calculations. The retirement of M. Necker from the superintendence of the finances had shaken the public confidence in the administration, and aggravated the already burdensome pressure of the demands for the war. The state of Europe threatened other differences, which might at any moment require a diversion of the forces of the nation. Spain, though at last involved in the war, was wavering, capricious, and intractable. It would not do to risk the alienation of two such powers as Austria and Russia, by slighting their offer of mediation, especially if Great Britain should decide to accept it. Under such circumstances, it was of the first importance to him that he should hold as many of the threads of negotiation exclusively in his own hands as possible, and especially that he should run no risk of entanglement, from any obstinacy on the part of the United States, in refusing to concede points of secondary interest to France. These it might become necessary for him to admit among the materials for negotiation, and for an exchange of equivalents. Substantial independence of Great Britain was all that he had ever been determined to gain for them by the war. On that point there was no doubt of his immobility, for the irreparable scission of the British empire made the corner-stone of his policy.

But in the month of July of this year, when action could no longer be deferred, congress had not yet become sufficiently

pliant to invest in the Count the great discretionary power which he had solicited, neither had they rescinded the positive instructions first given to Mr. Adams. It was, therefore, not possible to avoid at least the form of consulting him. The manner in which this was done has been explained. It certainly cannot be said to have been of that kind likely to inspire or even to cherish mutual confidence. Mr. Adams could not feel any reliance upon the good faith of the French cabinet, for nothing had been done to make him feel it. Of the disposition of Franklin, as between him and the Count, he had already had an experience too painful to tempt him to appeal to it. Mr. Francis Dana, in whom he had great confidence, and whose opinions accorded with his own, had gone on his mission to St. Petersburg. Nobody else was left in Paris with whom to consult. Great was the responsibility of the reply he was to make. Yet he did not hesitate. When called to decide immediately, his mind always acted with the greatest rapidity. On the very day that the three articles had been communicated to him, he transmitted a copy to the President of congress, with a letter embracing the principles upon which his answer was afterwards made.

The articles were in themselves simple enough. They provided for a wholly separate negotiation for peace between Great Britain and the colonies, without the intervention of France, or even of the mediators, unless these should be solicited to act. No treaty, however, was to be concluded or signed, excepting simultaneously with the execution of a peace between the belligerents for whose interests the mediators were providing. The third article proposed an armistice for one or more years, to accommodate the negotiations, and the maintenance of things as they were on all sides, during the interval that might thus occur.

But there was a fourth article, which Count de Vergennes did not see fit to disclose. It provided, in case of the acceptance of the plan by *all the parties*, that the belligerents should call upon the mediating courts to open the congress, and that they should, without delay, commission the proper delegates to attend it. The reason for this suppression must be left to be conjectured from the general tendency of that minister's conduct, which showed distrust of his ability to overrule Mr. Adams's construction of his own powers. And the fourth article certainly

left a great opening for him, if disposed to claim for America an equal position in the congress.

On the 13th of July, being only two days after the reception of the three articles, Mr. Adams communicated to Count de Vergennes his answer. He began by expressing a strong repugnance to any idea of a truce, which involved the continuance of the British forces in America. But, waving this, his decisive objection was aimed against the anomalous position which his country was to be made to occupy in the course of the negotiations. It was to play the part of an insurgent, endeavoring to make terms with a superior power, instead of one sovereignty contracting on equal footing with others. This would place the question of their independence at the mercy of a congress of ministers of the powers of Europe, to which the United States could never give their consent, "because," as Mr. Adams said, "let that congress determine as it might, their sovereignty, with submission only to Divine Providence, never can, and never will be given up."

This answer was transmitted to Count de Vergennes with a note, briefly and modestly enough expressing uncertainty as to the direction which the Count proposed to give to it, and doubt if the points had all been fully seized, upon which his opinion had been asked. In either case, Mr. Adams declared himself ready to modify or correct whatever might be regarded as exceptionable. Five days afterwards the Count, misinterpreting the whole spirit of the proposal, sent a reply assuming that Mr. Adams intended to claim directly of the mediators a place in the congress, informing him that there were preliminaries to be adjusted with respect to the United States before he could do so, and closing with something not unlike a menace of the forfeiture of his position in case of his venturing to take any such step. And not satisfied with this, the reply was addressed and franked by the Count himself, to Mr. Adams, as *agent* of the United States of North America, and not as minister empowered to negotiate a treaty of peace.

Taking no notice either of this ominous proceeding under a government in whose esteem titles were things, or yet of the absence of ordinary courtesy in the tone of the answer, Mr. Adams went on to explain, in three successive letters, of marked ability, his views of the impossibility of an acceptance of this

mediation by France, without previously establishing the character of the United States as a party to the negotiation. His arguments, although materially affected by his ignorance of the existence of the fourth article, had their natural operation on the mind of the French minister. Not greatly inclined to welcome the interposition of the mediating powers, and yet anxious to avoid offence by directly declining it, Count de Vergennes drew an answer which the historian of French diplomacy describes as *très enveloppée*. Whilst he declared that the propositions, as they stood, could not be accepted by France consistently with her dignity, he yet intimated that her objections might be removed, provided the right way were taken to that end. What that way was, the historian does not explain.[1] From other sources, it is shown to have been a demand of the prior recognition of the United States, remarkably in accordance with the argument addressed to the Count by Mr. Adams. But Great Britain had already precluded all questions on this point by a haughty rejection of the mediation, because it would permit France to stand between her and the colonies. The imperial courts, not yet discouraged, made one more effort to bring the belligerents to terms. But the only effect of it was to enable the French minister to extricate himself from all his embarrassments by throwing the blame of the failure upon the side of Great Britain. His last paper was not sent until the first of January, 1782. Long before that, Mr. Adams had returned to Holland to resume the tangled thread of his operations there. And thus it was that this great movement, which at one moment looked so ominous to the interests of America, came to an insignificant end.

On the very day that Mr. Adams wrote his last letter to Count de Vergennes, the Committee of Foreign Affairs, through Mr. Lovell, were writing from Philadelphia to tell him of the success of that minister in his persevering effort to procure a revocation of the powers to negotiate a treaty of commerce. The tone of congress had gradually become lowered. The people were suffering from exhaustion by the war; especially

[1] Flassan, tom. vii. p. 317. The answer translated is in the *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Revolution*, vol. xi. p. 33. An extract was obtained by Mr. Adams, through Mr. Dana, whilst in Russia, together with copies of the later papers. They may be found in the Appendix to the seventh volume of the present work.

so in the Southern States, which had latterly become the theatre of the conflict. Hence a majority of the members, after a sharp struggle, were brought to consent to accept in part the suggestions of the French minister. They very wisely, though not until one attempt had failed, enlarged the commission for negotiating the peace, by joining with Mr. Adams, Dr. Franklin, Mr. Jay, Mr. Jefferson, and Mr. Laurens. This insured a general representation of the interests in the respective States, and a greater probability of acquiescence in any result which might be arrived at. The next step was not so wise. They abandoned every ultimatum of their first instructions excepting the point of independence, and they tied to it a superfluous condition, extorted by the anxieties of the minister, that the treaties with France should, at all events, be preserved. Every thing else was to be left to the discretion of the commissioners.

Had the instructions stopped here, the independent spirit of the country would have been saved; and here they were intended by the committee that drew them to stop. But France was not satisfied, and required more. At the instigation of M. de la Luzerne, the words directing their ministers "to use their own judgment and prudence in securing the interest of the United States" were erased, and the words "ultimately to govern themselves by the advice and opinion of the French minister" were introduced, as amendments. The decision showed the influence of Massachusetts to be in the wane. Even New Hampshire, under the guidance of John Sullivan, deserted her, and Pennsylvania was no better than neutral. Massachusetts stood out in opposition, sustained only by Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Delaware. The attitude of Virginia was no longer what it had been when the Lees were in hearty union and cooperation with the Adamses. The Lees had come under reproach for their friendship to Massachusetts, and less kindly spirits had taken their places. The pressure of the war was upon her, and she consented to the greatest humiliation of the national pride recorded in the nation's annals. Even those members who voted for it felt ashamed, and repeatedly attempted to expunge it afterwards. But the record, because once made, was permitted to remain by those who offered nothing to excuse it. They had placed the power over peace in the hands of the French minister, limiting it in only those particulars in which the interests

of the two nations were identical. Every thing else was left at the mercy of a negotiation between three European powers having primary interests of their own, some of which conflicted with those of the United States. That the latter were saved through other guardianship than that of the French court from the necessity of making great sacrifices, the issue, it is believed, will clearly show.

Much of this intelligence, when it finally reached Mr. Adams, was little calculated to give vigor to his exertions. The only portion of it which afforded him relief, was that relating to the enlargement of the peace commission. To a friend, who addressed an inquiry to him under an impression that the news might be disagreeable, he instantly replied, in confidence: —

"The great transaction you allude to is this. A new commission for peace. J. Adams, B. Franklin, H. Laurens, J. Jay, and T. Jefferson, are the ministers. I do not see that this is any trial at all of spirit and fortitude. It is more honorable than before, and much more easy. I assure you it has been a great comfort to me. The measure is right. It is more respectful to the powers of Europe concerned, and more likely to give satisfaction in America."

But, as a counterpoise to this, came what was of a very painful character to him. He had, previously to this time, been receiving impressions more and more unfavorable to the policy of Count de Vergennes. He had himself been treated by him with any thing rather than confidence. He thought he saw a disposition on his part to grasp the control of all the interests of America in the negotiations. He had occasion to feel that his own efforts had been opposed in Holland. He knew that Mr. Jay had made no progress in Spain. He received letters from his friend and secretary, Francis Dana, who had gone upon a mission of adventure to Russia, which convinced him of the existence of the same policy at St. Petersburg. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Count did apprehend a possibility that support given in other quarters to America might tend to obstruct the negotiations, by introducing new and possibly discordant elements, even if it should not raise the demands of the Americans to an inconvenient height. His experience had likewise taught him the difficulty of pacifying the obstinate yet greedy imbecility of Spain. Under such complicated embarrass-

ments it is not at all to be wondered at that he should aim, so far as he could, to control all the elements of a pacification. But what was wise in him to desire, it might not be so wise in others to concede. Considering that the fisheries were a rival interest on one side, and the western limits were obviously a point of jealousy on the part of Spain; considering, too, that France at no time had shown the smallest disposition to favor America in either case, it was not deemed by Mr. Adams discreet or prudent to place the absolute disposal of these questions in her hands. It does not appear, however, that he received a copy of the new instructions so early as the other intelligence; and when he did, it was at a time that he was so deeply engaged in pursuing his great object at the Hague as to render every other consideration subordinate to his success there.

Affairs in Holland were rapidly coming to a crisis. England, disappointed in not subduing the resistance in that country by arrogance, had proceeded to execute her threats by a declaration of war. The Dutch opposition, well enough disposed to exertion in the defence of the country, was neutralized by the secret indifference, if not treachery, of the Stadtholder, and the insufficient support rendered by France. For the latter power it was not desirable to go further than to secure from the secondary States a harmony in sentiment and neutrality in action. The effort of Mr. Adams to rouse the popular feeling, by awakening sympathy with the American cause, seemed to Count de Vergennes as idle as it was foreign from a strict diplomatic policy. He had scouted it when proposed by him to be used as an engine in Great Britain, in connection with the treaty of commerce. He scouted it now in Holland. By his instigations at Philadelphia, Mr. Livingston, then become the foreign secretary of congress, had been charged with the duty of remonstrating with Mr. Adams upon his course. Dr. Franklin, whose own system had ever been that of a masterly inactivity, and exclusive reliance upon France, contented himself with treating it with a little quiet sarcasm. The consequence was, that Mr. Adams went on in the path he had chosen, alone, with no advantage of assistance or encouragement from his natural friends, and animated solely by his own energy and judgment.

Two events just now came in, however, to exercise no unim-

portant influence upon his operations. One of them was the capitulation of Lord Cornwallis, the official account of which was transmitted directly to Mr. Adams by General Washington. The other was the arrival of still another commission, and instructions from congress to propose to the States General a treaty of triple alliance between France, Holland, and the United States. This measure had been initiated by Mr. Adams in a suggestion made to the Duke de la Vauguyon, the French envoy at the Hague, who had thought so well of it as to recommend it to the notice of his government. Count de Vergennes saw its value as an expedient with which to counteract the acceptance by Great Britain of the offer of Russia to mediate between herself and Holland, of the effects of which upon the doubting and divided counsels of the latter country he was apprehensive. But when Mr. Adams, clothed with his new powers, proposed to the Duke de la Vauguyon to go forward in a public manner, either jointly or separately, as the latter might think most advisable, he was constantly put off with the excuse that no instructions had yet been received. Not mistaking the drift of this delay, Mr. Adams felt that no alternative was left but utter inaction or a further advance upon his own responsibility. He determined upon going forward alone.

Throughout this period the situation of Holland was peculiar. For more than a century her general policy had been to cherish the closest relations with Great Britain, and to hold France as her natural and most formidable enemy. Whatever might have been the recommendations to this course, when first commenced under the auspices of William the Third, there can be no question that, as it continued, the weaker country gradually contracted habits of dependence on her commercial rival, under which her weight in the scale of nations steadily declined. The most palpable proof of it is to be found in the substitution, for the original relations of alliance, of something more like those of master and servant. The British envoy at the Hague, Sir Joseph Yorke, during his thirty years' residence, had so habituated the people to his dictatorial tone, that, however arrogant or unreasonable his demands, they were scarcely received with surprise. The Stadtholder, a man of vacillating purpose, directed by a favorite incompetent and selfish, and relying for his support upon his hereditary family influence among the

people of the lesser States, accommodated his policy to the English, not so much from any expectation of advantage to the country, as from a sense of the need of support against the opposition of what was left of the famous old party of the republic, that of the De Witts and De Ruyter, in the commercial cities. The members of that party still cherished the ancient memories of the national freedom, though they were without the vigor necessary to raise it into a present reality. They required something to lean upon, some material prop, before they could summon any heart for a struggle. France stood ready to furnish, at least, the semblance of sympathy with liberty,[1] and rather than have no aid from without, they were content to take it, without narrowly scanning its genuineness. Hence the resuscitation of what was called the popular party at this time.

But it may be doubted whether all that France would have been willing to risk in this adventure could have met with much success, had not Great Britain, with the singular wantonness which marks every step of her action during this period, labored as if determined to throw the whole game into her hands. The choice was not given to Holland even to remain neutral. As if bent upon driving the commerce of that country to ruin, whatever they might do, Britain magnified the causes of offence which its chief city had given, at the same time that she demanded of the government, controlled by her own friends, a reparation which she must have known it was not in their power to obtain for her. Instead of resorting to kindness and conciliation, which, in the nervous uneasiness of the moneyed interest, would probably have secured a great extent of concession as an alternative to the hazards of war, she seemed rather to seek to avoid the means which might have made the last resort unnecessary. If such a policy was prompted, as has been sometimes suggested, by mere eagerness for plunder, by the desire to pounce upon the rich *entrepôt* of Eustatia, and to cripple still further the declining commerce of the Dutch, little more can be needed to complete the evidence touching the spirit of the counsels which had brought on the whole contest. But this, perhaps, would be too harsh a judgment. Great Britain has

[1] "Les amis de la France devaient toujours *crier* la liberté." Flassan describes this as the policy of the court of Versailles under Louis the Fifteenth. From that quarter it was a cry and nothing else, as well in Holland as in America.

generally been overbearing, but she is seldom mercenary. Even the caustic Frederick charged her only with an overweening confidence in the power of her guineas to gain all her objects through others. The more probable conclusion is, that it was the triumph of 1763 which had nourished the haughty and uncompromising temper that ultimately concentrated against her the feelings of the continent, and made her mortifications, in 1783, the cause of mutual congratulation among all the nations of Europe.

Another, and perhaps a still stronger reason may have tempted Great Britain to declare war against the Dutch. She well knew the country to be torn by contending factions, and she may have hoped to stimulate the Stadtholder and his friends to a degree of energy which might establish his preponderance, and completely crush the power of his opponents. If such was indeed the expectation, the result sufficiently proves its folly. For instead of inspiring the Orange party with vigor, the effect was, on the contrary, to revive, for a brief period, some sparks of the spirit which had animated the resistance to the Spanish dominion, and to paralyze the court. This spirit it had become the interest of France to cherish, but not by any means to the extent which those impelled by it desired. To engage Holland vigorously in the war, might involve the obligation of continuing it solely for her sake beyond the moment when the objects for which it had been commenced could be gained to France. But the ardor of the popular leaders, stimulated by the vehemence of opposition to the Stadtholder's party, however it might be viewed by France, could appear to a representative of the United States in no other light than as furnishing a blessed opportunity, to be improved as far as possible, for the benefit of his struggling country. To this end he had labored to establish relations with the chiefs, and had preferred their advice to that of the French minister. Conceiving it of the first importance to obtain, if possible, an acknowledgment of the independence of the United States by the Dutch, he made up his mind to push for it, even though France, viewing it from a European position, should regard it as of no moment. Hence it was rather with the acquiescence than the full approval of the Duke de Vauguyon, that, in consonance with the suggestions of leading patriots, and especially the bold Van der Capellen,

he made up his mind to take a daring step, which might indeed accomplish his great object, but which, on the other hand, if it failed, would inevitably, for the time, detract seriously from his reputation, and render the chances of success, afterwards, more desperate than ever.

Every thing having been accordingly arranged, on the 8th of January, 1782, Mr. Adams commenced a series of formal visits, in person, to the chief officers, and the deputies of each city, in the States General, at the Hague, in which he respectfully reminded them of the memorial he had addressed to them, asking for the recognition of his country, to which he had not yet received any reply. He then stated the object of his visit to be to demand a CATEGORICAL ANSWER, in order that he might transmit it, without delay, to his government. He was received with the same general form of reply in every instance, but with greater or less kindliness, according as the members sympathized with his object or otherwise. All of them pleaded the absence of instructions, without which they were not competent to act, but promised to transmit his demand to their respective constituencies in order to hasten them. There can be little doubt that the movement was a signal for invigorating the agitation already set in motion in the various parts of the confederacy. Neither was it long in producing visible results. In the complicated system of government then established, more nearly approximating an aristocracy than any other known form, although the people had small powers of absolute control, their municipal organizations furnished extraordinary facilities of directing opinion with force upon the constituent bodies. It was by this agency that the cause of America was now to be advanced. In many of the great towns, such as Leyden, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Haerlem, Utrecht, Zwol, petitions were gotten up, setting forth, at more or less length, reasons why the provincial States, to which they respectively belonged, should be instructed early to declare in favor of granting Mr. Adams's demand. The anxiety with which he watched the progress of these movements, may be gathered from his correspondence with Mr. C. W. F. Dumas, through whom, as familiar with the Dutch, French, and English languages, and, moreover, as a zealous coadjutor, all the communications with the actors were carried on. Even under the waning influence of the Stadt-

holder, the idea of soon carrying the point with seven States, the separate assent of each of whom was indispensable to success, could scarcely be entertained. Yet such was the activity and earnestness displayed, and so strongly had the current set against the Orange party, not unreasonably suspected of crippling the national resources in the war for the sake of aiding Great Britain, that every obstacle was quickly swept away.

Only seven weeks after Mr. Adams's formal demand, the States of Friesland adopted a resolution, instructing their delegates in the States General to accede to it. The announcement of this decision seems to have given a great impetus to the action of the delegates of the other States at the Hague. As city declared itself after city in the wealthy province of Holland, it became certain, before another month elapsed, that incomparably the most powerful State of the confederacy would range herself on the same side. Zealand and Overyssel were not long in following, and in the same week of April the three other States, Groningen, Utrecht, and Guelderland, declared themselves. No sooner was the decision of the last State received than the States General proceeded to act. And thus it happened that on the 19th of April, exactly one year from the date of Mr. Adams's first memorial, an anniversary otherwise memorable in the commencement of the American struggle, the delegates, having received their instructions, directed, unanimously, the following record to be placed on their journals: —

"Deliberated by resumption upon the address and the ulterior address made by Mr. Adams, the 4th of May, 1781, and the 9th of January of the current year, to the President of the Assembly of their High Mightinesses, to present to their High Mightinesses his letters of credence, in the name of the United States of North America, and by which ulterior address the said Mr. Adams has demanded a categorical answer, to the end to be able to acquaint his constituents thereof; it has been thought fit and resolved that Mr. Adams shall be admitted and acknowledged in quality of envoy of the United States of North America to their High Mightinesses, as he is admitted and acknowledged by the present."

Three days after the adoption of this resolution, Mr. Adams was introduced to the Stadtholder; and the next day, to the

States General, as the accredited minister of the new nation, the United States of America; after which the Duke de la Vauguyon made a formal entertainment for the ministers representing the other European States, and Mr. Adams was there presented to each of them as a new and recognized member of the *corps diplomatique* at the Hague.

Such was the fortunate termination of this venturous undertaking. The struggle had been severe. It had begun under circumstances of extreme discouragement, and had been carried on with little aid from any external quarter. The capture of Mr. Laurens, and the consequences of his failure to destroy his secret papers, in involving the Dutch in the war, which had roused so strong a feeling of aversion to Mr. Adams and his errand as almost to endanger him at Amsterdam, had gradually given way under a reaction which Great Britain had done the most to bring on. His activity had formed the literary connections, through which alone an opening could be made for him, a stranger equally to the language and manners of the people, to reach their ears or their hearts. He had judged rightly, at the outset, that it was in their sympathy with a brave nation struggling for liberty, as their own ancestors had done for forty long years against the oppressions of Spain, that the true road lay to success. The coöperation of France was but a formal aid, effective so far as it went, but never based upon any other than strictly European views of policy. Indeed, it is among the most curious portions of this history that nearly coincident with the hour of his triumph came those dispatches from Mr. Livingston, already alluded to as instigated by France, which disapproved the course of action he had felt it his duty to adopt.

Considering all these things, with the steady opposition manifested by the Stadtholder, and by all the English influence up to this period paramount in Holland, this may be justly regarded, not simply as the third moral trial, but, what Mr. Adams himself always regarded it, as the greatest success of his life. If he appears to have now and then boasted of it in his correspondence more than was quite seemly, at least it was not without some justification. He felt, what is probably true, that no one would be likely to understand or appreciate the labors and the anxieties he had gone through, the steadfastness

with which he had followed his object, alike unmindful of the objections of the cautious, the hesitation of the timid, the doubts of the lukewarm, and the stratagems of the hostile. It is this quality which marks Mr. Adams's career as a statesman through all its various phases with the stamp of greatness. In the arts of indirection, the mere management and manœuvring of politics or diplomacy, he never had the smallest skill; but in the faculty of combining means with judgment and energy so as to attain the public end he had in view, down to the close of his public life, he showed himself a master. And nowhere is this made to appear more strikingly than in his correspondence with M. Dumas and others through whom he acted during the period now under consideration in Holland. After it was all over, he wrote to his wife at home, briefly contrasting the difficulties experienced in the only two countries in which America had as yet been successful, in the following terms: —

"The embassy here has done great things. It has not merely tempted a natural rival, and an imbittered, inveterate, hereditary enemy to assist a little against Great Britain, but it has torn from her bosom a constant, faithful friend and ally of a hundred years' duration. It has not only prevailed with a minister or an absolute court to fall in with the national prejudice, but without money, without friends, and in opposition to mean intrigue, it has carried its cause, by the still small voice of reason and persuasion, triumphantly against the uninterrupted opposition of family connections, court influence, and aristocratical despotism."

His labors were not intermitted by this event, for he entered forthwith upon measures likely to render it of the most service to America. This was the favorable moment for resuming his conferences with bankers and capitalists, and he improved it. So long as the recognition of the United States had remained in doubt, even though the current of events had been removing more and more every prospect of the reëstablishment of the authority of Great Britain, there was little heart among the moneyed men to undertake, or the people at large to second any pecuniary advances. But now that the States General had decided to give countenance to the new nation, Mr. Adams felt the difference, in the reception of offers from several of the most responsible houses in Holland to undertake a loan. It is needless to go into the details of the negotiations that followed.

The papers that relate to them are most of them given in the volumes of this work devoted to the official correspondence. It is enough here to say that through the activity of three houses, Messrs. Willink, Van Staphorst, and De la Lande & Fynje, a sum of five millions of guilders was obtained, at a moment when it was of essential service in maintaining the overstrained credit of the United States.

Nor yet did this beneficial interposition of Holland stop with the first loan. When America, at the close of seven years of war, was exhausted, and gasping for breath, the funds which she was enabled, for a time, to draw from this source were most opportune to keep her from sinking altogether. France, to whom alone she had been able to look for aid in the early stages of the contest, was beginning to give signs of the distress which resulted so deplorably afterwards. From the date of the first successful loan until Mr. Adams returned to America, in 1788, he kept up his relations with the bankers of Amsterdam, and through them succeeded in procuring successive advances, which carried his country safely over the interval of disorder previous to the consolidation of the federal government. This great step, once taken, soon rendered further assistance unnecessary. The people began to gather up their resources, and to pour, almost without an effort, into the coffers of the treasury sufficient sums to pay their Dutch friends an ample compensation for the confidence they had been willing to extend in their hour of need. And in witnessing this process, no one enjoyed a more unmingled satisfaction than Mr. Adams. To him who had done so much to persuade the Dutchmen to trust the honor of his countrymen, the sense that these had redeemed all the pledges he ventured to give for them, was even more gratifying to his pride than if he had been acquitting a personal obligation of his own.

Neither did another great measure linger long unexecuted. On the very day that Mr. Adams was received by the States General, he presented a memorial, stating that he was authorized by his government to propose a treaty of amity and commerce between the two republics, and soliciting the nomination of some person or persons on the part of the States with full powers to treat. That body acceded to the request at once, and appointed a committee before whom Mr. Adams laid a

project which he had prepared, in conformity with the instructions he had received from congress. So slow, however, were the forms of transacting business under the system of that cautious people that, notwithstanding the trifling nature of the obstacles in the way of a perfect agreement, nearly five months elapsed before the negotiations were concluded, and nearly another month passed before the treaties were ready for execution. At last, on the 7th of October, 1782, the last hand was put to the papers, and Mr. Adams had the satisfaction of sending Mr. Livingston for ratification the second alliance entered into by the United States as a sovereign power. The two events, of the recognition of the United States, and of the signature of a treaty with them, were deemed of such interest that an artist in Holland thought them worthy of being commemorated by the execution of two medals, the designs upon which have been engraved, and will be found in the seventh and eighth volumes of the present work.

Such is the history of the negotiation in Holland. A history which, whether we consider the difficulties to be vanquished, the means at his disposal, the energy and perseverance to be exerted or the prudence to be exercised to the attainment of the end, places Mr. Adams at once in the first class of diplomatists. The fact that it was executed on one of the lesser theatres of Europe, and was productive of only limited effects, does not in any way detract from the merits of the execution. Justly was it denominated by one who had spent his life in the diplomatic service, a "*grand coup.*" And it deserved the more to be called so, because it was not struck by the modes often resorted to in courts. There were no arts or disguises, no flattery or fawning, no profligacy or corruption put in use to further the result. It was an honest victory of principle gained by skilfully enlisting in a just cause the confidence and sympathy of a nation. And it was won by a man who up to the fortieth year of his life had scarcely crossed the borders of the small province in America within which he was born, and who had had no opportunities to profit of those lessons on the radiant theatres of the world, which even the republican poet of England was willing to admit, in his time, to be

> "Best school of best experience, quickest insight
> In all things that to greatest actions lead."

Considering these circumstances, in connection with the fact that Mr. Adams was placed at once in the face of many of the most experienced and adroit statesmen in Europe, who viewed all his proceedings with distrust, if not disapprobation, although this event, if measured by its consequences, may not claim in itself so important a place in history as some others in which he took a decisive part, yet, as being the most exclusively the result of his own labors, it well merits to be ranked, in the way he ranked it, as *the greatest triumph of his life.*

CHAPTER VII.

The Negotiation and Signature of the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain.

The moral trial described in the last chapter, was not yet entirely passed. It had only changed its form. Some time prior to the completion of the labors there narrated, the calls upon Mr. Adams to repair to another great scene of duty, opening at Paris, had become quite urgent. Not much disposed to be subject, without strong necessity, to a renewal of the rude and menacing tone which Count de Vergennes had not forborne again to use on his last visit, Mr. Adams waited to be convinced that the causes were sufficient to require his presence before he went. Nor was the necessity of putting the seal to the treaty, which he had succeeded in negotiating with the States of Holland, without its imperative force in favor of delay. He deemed it wise to make sure of it before he should leave the Hague. But, this great object once gained, he lost not a moment more. The fact had become by this time apparent that Great Britain was making some attempts at negotiation. Intimations had also been received of the occurrence of differences of opinion at Paris, which his intervention would be required to decide. These events contributed to quicken his movements, so that, on the 26th of October, 1782, he was again in the French capital. In order to comprehend the state of things he found there, it will be necessary to go back a little, and explain the several steps which led to the pacification.

Even before the decisive vote given in the House of Commons upon General Conway's motion, which snapped the chain by which Lord North had been so long held to his sovereign, and before that sovereign had been compelled to subject his recalcitrating will to the necessity of receiving the Whigs once more into his counsels, emissaries had been sent to the con-

tinent, directed to discover where the Americans were who were understood to have powers to treat, and what was the precise extent of their authority. They succeeded in their object so far, that on the 11th of March, the day after Lord North had given to the king his final decision to resign, but before any successor had been designated, a private individual, by the name of Digges, who had been in more or less communication with the American ministers throughout the war, was dispatched with a message and a letter from David Hartley to Mr. Adams, announcing that a bill was about to be enacted in parliament to enable the crown to conclude a peace *or truce* with America, and desiring to know whether the four commissioners understood to have been appointed by her were empowered to *conclude* as well as to *treat*, and whether jointly or severally. This agent was sent by Lord North, but with the privity of General Conway, Lord Shelburne, and the leaders of the opposition. His real object seems to have been to sound Mr. Adams as to the possibility of a separate negotiation for a truce. The repugnance to admitting, in any way, the intervention of France, was yet all powerful in the mind of the sovereign, and it existed more or less strongly among all British statesmen, of whatever party.[1] Nor was the hope abandoned that the nation might yet be saved the mortification of a direct acknowledgment of the independence of the United States. Indeed, visions still flitted across the brain of royalty of the possibility, even at this stage, of succeeding in severing the alliance between them and France, and continuing the war with effect upon one or the other division, as the case might be.

There is reason to infer that all these things combined to originate the experiment upon Mr. Adams, whose dissatisfaction with Count de Vergennes, not entirely unknown in Holland, might have reached the ears of the king. Mr. Adams, apparently quite aware of the delicacy of his position, in agreeing to a conference proposed by Mr. Digges, at Amsterdam, on the 20th of March, attached the condition that it should not be conducted without a witness, and that he should be at liberty to communicate all that might pass to Dr. Franklin and the Count

1 Even Mr. Fox seems to have cherished the idea, at this time, of detaching America from France. *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, edited by Lord John Russell, vol. i. p. 341.

de Vergennes; a wise precaution, which proved not without effect in dispelling from the mind of the latter the suspicions of British tendencies which Gérard had first implanted and which subsequent contentions had nourished.[1] The effect of the condition was partially to close the mouth of Digges, who was probably charged with communications to Mr. Adams, of the nature of which Mr. Hartley himself had not been made aware, and to deter him altogether from prosecuting the journey to see Dr. Franklin, which Hartley had arranged for him. Instead of this, Digges took Mr. Adams's advice and hastily retraced his steps to London. In point of fact, his mission had already failed. Upon his return home he wrote to Mr. Adams, expressing his own doubts of the sincerity of the whole movement, not only on the part of Lord North, but likewise of the incoming ministry. "I could wish," he said, "I had it more in my power than I now have to say I had clearly discovered the intentions of the new set, at least those I have conversed with, to wit, Lord Shelburne, Lord Camden, General Conway, and Lord Keppel, to be that of going to peace with America on the avowed basis of independence. Every voice pronounces it to be their intention, but I like a little more open declaration for so doing. Time will show what is meant, but, I own, appearances do not please me."

Other overtures came through Lord Shelburne to Mr. Adams, but he was yet too incredulous of any good faith to be disposed to put confidence in them. He therefore contented himself with apprising the French court of the facts, through Dr. Franklin, and resumed his labors in Holland, just then culminating to the wished for point. In truth, the public mind in England was teeming with visions of the possibility of yet succeeding in a disruption of the formidable combinations against her, of drawing off Holland or Spain, of buying up a reconciliation with America, and even of a separate pacification with France. An attempt to effect this last scheme, coeval with the mission of Digges, was made through an emissary, used more or less

[1] The motive assigned by Count de Vergennes for Digges's mission is singular. He called it a hope that "Mr. John Adams's *connection with some independent members* might facilitate an accommodation." At least this was the version of his dispatch furnished verbally to Mr. Livingston by M. de la Luzerne.

throughout the war, by the name of Forth,[1] who visited Count de Vergennes as from Lord North, and without the privity of the Whigs. The substance of his conference is given in a dispatch, dated two days later, from De Vergennès to the French envoy at Madrid, Count de Montmorin. But in that he, singularly enough, omits to mention one important offer made to him, the knowledge of which has been gained from elsewhere. The same omission occurs in the communication of the overture made by his order to congress. This was the restoration of Canada, as the price of a separate peace. To the Count it raised no temptation, for his line of policy had always been the retention of Canada just where it was, as a check on the new American nation. Neither is it at all probable that he regarded it as made in good faith. The mission was symbolical of the distracted councils in which it originated, and of nothing else. For if the nature of these contemporaneous overtures, through Digges and Forth, be analyzed in connection with the fact that during the same time Lord Shelburne alone had been consulted by the king, whilst the Rockingham Whigs were studiously kept out of his confidence, the inference is irresistible that none of them were more than clumsy traps, without a foundation worthy a moment's trust.

Neither does it appear that the uncertainty of purpose, which is visible before the induction of the Whigs into office, entirely ceased even quite down to the moment of pacification. Whatever may be thought of Lord Shelburne's good will at last to carry through a policy of conciliation with the United States as an independent nation, there is great reason to question it at the outset. In the administration formed under the Marquis of Rock-

[1] A history of the various secret agencies, instituted by the British government on the continent during the struggle, would make a curious chapter. To them it is doubtless fair to attribute the efforts made through anonymous letters to tempt the American ministers, as well as to embroil them with each other. Several remarkable specimens of this kind remain among Mr. Adams's papers. Forth had been secretary to Lord Stormont in France before the war, and had given early warning of the events which led to it. Dr. Bancroft seems to have been a source of information, doubtless on account of his intimacy with Dr. Franklin, but whether paid or not is left doubtful. Paul Wentworth was a good deal in Holland during the period of Mr. Adams's negotiations there. The precise time when Silas Deane sold his services, is not quite made out. All these persons, as well as two or three others, are mentioned as channels of intelligence in the correspondence of the King with Lord North. The allusion to Deane, on the 8th of March, 1781, is obscure.

ingham, in which the king was finally compelled to acquiesce, the department of foreign affairs had been assigned to Charles Fox, whilst that of the colonies fell to Lord Shelburne. A difficulty immediately occurred, on account of the anomalous condition of America. In the English view, the United States were still dependent and separate colonies, and therefore under the supervision of Shelburne. In point of fact, their independence and their union as one nation were admitted, and therefore all dealings with them more properly belonged to Fox. This embarrassment was much aggravated by the jealousy already existing from other causes between the two chiefs. Neither was it in any way relieved by the accidental circumstances through which the negotiation took its rise. A private letter, addressed by Dr. Franklin to Lord Shelburne upon the change of administration, expressive of a hope that peace might grow out of it, was made by Shelburne an excuse for sending, without the knowledge of the cabinet, Mr. Richard Oswald, a gentleman described by him as "a pacifical man, conversant in those negotiations which are most interesting to mankind," to Paris, informally to inquire upon what terms a peace with America could be initiated. The notion of a separate peace was yet the predominating one. Neither was it dispelled until Dr. Franklin assured his visitor that a conference with Count de Vergennes was indispensable to any further proceedings. Mr. Oswald accordingly conferred with the French minister, as well as he could without knowing the French language, and offered to become the medium of conveying to his employer propositions for a general negotiation.

It cannot be pretended that this last proceeding was not an encroachment upon the province of Mr. Fox and the action of the cabinet. Mr. Oswald is reported, by Count de Vergennes, to have proposed a scheme of truce, upon the old ground of *uti possidetis*, not unlike that suggested by Spain two years before, at this time when the Rockingham party was notoriously disposed to adopt a more liberal policy of concession.[1]

[1] This proposition, intended for the Americans, was made to Count de Vergennes, in order to enlist his authority with them to secure its adoption. No wonder that the Count's fine tact marvelled at the "absurdity" of Shelburne's agent.

Much of the secret history of these events is now furnished to the world from the three sources. The above fact is given in the dispatch of Count de Vergennes to Count de Montmorin, in Spain, April 18, 1782. *Flassan*, tom. vii. p. 331.

But Dr. Franklin, wholly unconscious of all these entanglements in the British cabinet, sent Mr. Oswald home with a kind letter to Lord Shelburne, expressive of a hope that he would soon return so amiable a gentleman, armed with powers to treat. The hint, falling in with Shelburne's own desire to control the negotiation, was eagerly taken, and Oswald was sent back with a promise of such powers. Oswald appears to have communicated to Franklin that part of the record of the cabinet council held on the 27th of April, which settled the terms of a general pacification, but, perhaps from a wish not to expose domestic troubles to the eye of so shrewd an observer, he omitted the significant conclusion which Mr. Fox had succeeded in attaching to it.[1] By that conclusion, Fox had drawn the negotiation with France back into his own hands. Distrustful of Shelburne's agent, he had appointed Mr. Thomas Grenville to confer with Count de Vergennes. This omission, significant of the dissensions at home, was supplied by Oswald's announcement of the fact of that appointment, *verbally, as he was ordered*, towards the close of the conversation. Thus it appears that, at the very outset of this important proceeding, each of the two rival interests then in the British administration was carrying on a part of the same general duty, without harmony or even a desire to coöperate with the other. The effect of this was not long in making itself felt.

The prudence and statesmanship of Prince Kaunitz had more than once, during this war, proved unavailing to restrain some ejaculations at the diplomacy of his excellent English friends. Frederick the Second, of Prussia, had no opinion of it habitually. But nowhere is the justice of this verdict more palpable than in the opening details of these momentous negotiations. When Mr. Grenville, a person not without abilities, but a novice in such matters, not yet twenty-seven years of age, found his way over to Paris, and opened his business to one of the most expert veterans in Europe, the first inquiry addressed to him was upon the extent of his powers; for France could not treat excepting in conjunction with her allies. But no such question had been provided for or thought of in Lon-

[1] Compare the minutes of council as given by Franklin, from Oswald's reading, with the official copy. Sparks's *Franklin*, vol. ix. p. 266. Russell's *Memorials of Fox*, vol. i. p. 345.

don. Mr. Grenville's commission empowered him to deal only with France. Yet though the Count at once pronounced this a barrier to his treating, he offered to listen, and the embarrassed Grenville was fain to put up even with this mode of securing an opening for the great offer with which he considered himself charged. In the mind of an Englishman, nothing could be greater than the surrender of the point of American Independence; so that, when once uttered, the young man seemed to take it for granted that every thing would be settled, and peace ensue as a matter of course. His consternation may be imagined, when the adroit old minister assured him that American independence was but an incidental object of the war, and that many other concessions might be required of Great Britain before peace could be attained. These views the Count repeated the next day upon a renewal of the conference, at which he took the precaution of obtaining the presence of the Spanish minister, Count d'Aranda, in order to confirm and extend the impression he wished to make upon his youthful antagonist.

Greatly discouraged by this imposing exhibition of the temper of France, Grenville wrote home for further instructions and for an extension of his commission, if it was thought best to proceed. From the minutes of the cabinet council held on his application, it seems that a full authority to treat with "all the belligerent powers" was ordered to be sent to Mr. Grenville, though the basis of negotiation was not changed. Yet by some singular inattention on the part of the foreign office, the new commission came, bearing substantially the same restriction as before. Under such circumstances, it can be no cause of surprise that the wary French minister should infer that the whole proceeding lacked good faith. On the other hand, Dr. Franklin had his reasons for a similar conclusion, growing out of a still more extraordinary concurrence of accidents, not easy, from his point of view, to account for in any other way. They were these. At the time of Mr. Oswald's departure from Paris, after his visit of inquiry, Dr. Franklin had seized the opportunity to commit to his care a paper, designed for the eye of Lord Shelburne alone, which contained some reasons why a cession of Canada to the United States should be made an integral part of any basis that might be proposed of reconciliation between the two countries. It is most remarkable that the Doctor,

at the same time, imposed upon him a strong injunction of secrecy on this point, particularly as it respected the French ministry, *which did not favor the idea.* The bearing of this material fact will be made visible at a later period of the negotiation. Mr. Oswald, who seems throughout to have displayed the qualities rather of good sense, and a conciliatory temper, than of a trained statesman or advocate, manifested no aversion to the proposal, and cheerfully consented to become the bearer of it to Lord Shelburne. That minister, not over inclined to favor the idea, yet unwilling to put any unnecessary obstacle in the way of negotiation, preferred to wave the consideration of the subject until things should arrive at a later stage, and he so instructed Mr. Oswald upon his return to Paris. It did so happen, however, that in the course of a conversation with Mr. Grenville, Oswald, forgetting the injunction of secrecy, casually betrayed the fact that such a proposition had been received and considered by his principal. The effect of this disclosure upon Grenville was decisive. Attaching a much worse construction to it than the thing really merited, and yet not an unreasonable one under the peculiar circumstances, this gentleman instantly wrote to Mr. Fox, communicating his discovery, and requesting to be forthwith relieved from the painful position of appearing to conduct a negotiation actually managed by other hands. His desire, he said, was the more positive from the perception of a marked change in the manner of Dr. Franklin towards him ever since Mr. Oswald's return. Instead of opening himself unreservedly, as he had promised, not a word more could be gained from him on the topics of the proposed negotiation. This change, however surprising to Grenville, was to be accounted for naturally enough. Dr. Franklin, looking only from the outside, saw a duplicate mission, the reasons for which he could only in part conjecture, but the effect he perceived was to create confusion, and put off action. It is not, then, to be wondered at, that he should suspect it was all a contrivance for delay. Count de Vergennes, as has been already shown, was much in the same state of mind. It was, therefore, no more than the exercise of proper caution in Franklin, to decline further confidential conversation until he should be able definitely to understand what were the true intentions of Great Britain.

The life of Charles James Fox was one long game of chance, only the scene of which was changed, from Almack's and Brookes's, with a pack of cards, whenever in opposition; to the cabinet of the sovereign, with public principles, when put into the administration. It was a game, too, in which the luck was almost always against him. This time he had only come in to be tortured with jealousies and suspicions of his colleague, Lord Shelburne, who seemed to have the ear of the king, which was closed to him. In this state of mind, the intelligence conveyed by Grenville from Paris, came to him like confirmation strong of the duplicity to which he imputed the obvious difference in the royal favor. One thing was certain, that Oswald had been sent at first without consultation with the cabinet, to which not a whisper of such a proposal as the cession of Canada had ever been made. To remain a mere pageant, without power in the government, was out of the question. So the Rockingham party, to which Mr. Fox belonged, after consultation, made up their minds to avail themselves of the earliest excuse for retiring. One shade of difference between the factions related to the mode of initiating the negotiations with America. Whilst Fox advocated the more manly way of commencing with a recognition of her independence, Shelburne had wished to make it a condition to chaffer with in the peace negotiation. The question was brought up in the cabinet for a decision. The Rockingham Whigs were outvoted, which Mr. Fox construed as furnishing the desired opportunity; and accordingly their withdrawal was announced.

But before this design could be executed, a new event brought on a crisis of a different kind, which put another face upon affairs. It was the death of the chief of the Whigs, the Marquis of Rockingham, the very day after the cabinet meeting. The question now was, who should succeed him in that position, not less than who should become prime minister. The two situations had been united in Lord Rockingham. But Lord Shelburne, who now advanced very reasonable claims to the lead in the cabinet, claims backed by the preference of the king himself, stood no chance whatever of attaining the other place. The major part of the Whigs, under the influence of Fox, setting aside the pretensions of the Duke of Richmond, determined that, unless the Duke of Portland, whom they had made their

chief, was likewise placed at the head of the ministry, they would not consent even to form a part of the same cabinet with Shelburne. The consequence of these selfish and factious counsels was dissension, and an ultimate disruption of the party. The king, biased, perhaps, by the action at the last cabinet meeting, selected Shelburne, and the Duke of Richmond, with four other Whigs, decided to retain office, whilst Fox and the remainder chose to resign. It was the impulse of wounded pride in the latter, a motive which will never be found to sustain the action of a public man, especially at a critical moment in the affairs of his country. This was a primary cause of all the later errors of Mr. Fox, errors which must forever forfeit for him a place among Britain's best or purest statesmen.

The immediate effect of this revolution in the cabinet upon the state of things at Paris was the recall of Mr. Fox's minister, Grenville, who was only too glad to get away, but no material change in the double form of the negotiations. Mr. Oswald obtained his commission to treat with America, which had up to this moment been represented solely by Dr. Franklin. But Mr. Jay, having failed in animating Spain with a single generous or downright sentiment, now joined him as a colleague. In the room of Grenville, Thomas Townshend, the new foreign secretary, dispatched Mr. Alleyne Fitzherbert as the minister to treat with France. Besides these avowed agents, another gentleman, Mr. Benjamin Vaughan, repaired to Paris, with no ostensible commission, but, in fact, charged by Lord Shelburne to give him confidential information respecting the character of the American commissioners, and the easiest terms with which they would be likely to be satisfied.

The position occupied by Mr. Jay in the public affairs of the United States, down to the day of his election to the mission to Spain, has been already explained. It may be recollected that that election was regarded as a triumph by the French minister, bent upon defeating Arthur Lee, and counteracting the influence of the Eastern, or, as he called them, the British party. In the conflict, which raged so long in congress upon the instructions to be given to the negotiator for peace, Mr. Jay had been ranged among those who favored every modification of the *ultimata* that had been pressed by France, and this to such an

extent as to bring upon him the most determined resistance on the part of the New England States, as one ready to abandon their darling interest, the fisheries, in case he should be made the pacificator. But, as not infrequently happens in popular governments, the parties, in the vehemence of their struggles for a policy, forgot to measure the character of the man expected to execute it. They are apt to regard him merely as an index of the party that supports him. Such indeed, in common times, he too often proves. But these were not common times, and John Jay was no common man. Throughout the contest, his sympathies had never been with New England. The moderation and repose of his character had little in unison with the more stubborn and vehement temper that had carried on the struggle in the East. And so long as he was subjected to the collisions of opinion incident to public assemblies, he had almost instinctively ranged himself on the calmer and more conservative side. But this was very far from making him what the power which had contributed to bring him on the scene in Europe had expected. Jubilant at what he regarded his victory, M. Gérard, about to return to France, and willing perhaps to make an opportunity for intimacy with the new envoy, offered him a passage in the frigate which was to convey himself. The two accordingly embarked together. What happened on the voyage has not been fully explained. Mr. Jay has left enough to justify an inference that something or other then opened a novel train of ideas in his mind. Suspicions of the policy of France took their date from this period with him, which further observation, after he reached his destination, only tended more and more to confirm. Neither was it simply the failure of his wearisome solicitations to Spain for aid, always promised but never given, which weighed so much with him, as the conviction that the coöperation of France was not hearty. The objects of the latter power, at Madrid, were different, and the necessity of humoring her capricious ally, to gain them, overbore all other considerations. They might, in the end, lead even to her acquiescing in a sacrifice of favorite American claims in order to pacify her. Hence, when Mr. Jay found that he made no progress, it was a positive relief to him to receive a letter from Dr. Franklin, saying that the time had come for him to exchange his humiliating position as a rejected

mendicant at Madrid, for the more honorable task of negotiating a peace with Great Britain at Paris.

But if the experience of Mr. Jay, in his first mission, was not altogether agreeable, it was not without its compensations in better fitting him for his share of the task which now devolved upon him. He had at least been warned that Spain, so far from being disposed to yield the free navigation of the Mississippi, was pushing her claims to a boundary on the west of the United States, which would exclude them altogether from that river, and that France had expressed no aversion to the proceeding. With this clue he came to meet Count de Vergennes face to face. The first thing that fixed his attention, was the solicitude of that minister to have him begin with Count d'Aranda, the Spanish minister at Paris, the negotiation which he had in vain tried to conduct at the court he had just left. The next was the anxiety manifested by the confidential secretary of the foreign office, de Rayneval, that he should listen to the proposed sacrifice in regard to the boundary, which went to the extent of submitting to his consideration a memoir affirming the reasonableness of the Spanish claim. All this was to be arranged, too, previously to a recognition by Spain of the independence of America. Mr. Jay's cautious nature took the alarm. He began to suspect more than was actually intended. For the motives of France are now tolerably apparent. Foreseeing the greatest obstacles to a pacification from the intractable imbecility of Spain, Count de Vergennes, without wishing to do positive injury to America, was not the less disposed to keep within reach as many means of satisfying it as possible. Among them this cession of boundary was one; but the resolute refusal of Mr. Jay to treat without a prior acknowledgment of his position, put all possibility of resort to it, for the time, out of the question.

In the mean while the British government had gone on very slowly. Misled by the representations of unauthorized persons who had affirmed Dr. Franklin to be disposed to proceed without a recognition of American independence, or cherishing a hope that they might make something out of the concession, as an item in the negotiation, they yet showed a hesitation well calculated to keep alive the distrust of all the parties watching their movements at Paris. So late as the 25th of July, the

king's order to the attorney-general, to prepare a commission for Mr. Oswald, specified only an authority to treat with "commissioners of the thirteen *colonies*, or any *person* or *persons* whatsoever," and not with any sovereign state. And this authority was issued under the supervision of the Home, and not the Foreign Department. The phraseology was material, if there was no certainty of good faith behind it; and neither George the Third nor Shelburne bore an unequivocal reputation in that regard. Under these circumstances a copy of this commission was submitted by Mr. Oswald to Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay, who, in their turn, laid it before Count de Vergennes, for his advice. That minister, anxious to advance the negotiations, and regarding the precise form of treating as of small consequence, provided Great Britain would consent to treat at all, gave an opinion that it was sufficient, and this opinion Dr. Franklin cautiously seconded. The argument to sustain it was, that it was not to be expected that the effect, independence, should be made to precede its cause, the treaty itself. But in maintaining this, the existence of the treaty with France, and her own excuse made to Great Britain for negotiating it, which was that the independence of the United States was already established beyond question, were overlooked by Count de Vergennes. Mr. Jay, not convinced by the reasoning, having his experience of the joint Spanish and French representations fresh upon him, and deeply impressed with the responsibility of his position, was unwilling to commit himself to the sanction of a negotiation with so ambiguous a commencement. He declined to proceed.

But in order to acquit himself of his responsibility for this course, he determined on two measures; the one, a strong appeal to Mr. Oswald to exert himself with his government to procure a recognition of the United States; the other, the preparation of an elaborate paper, addressed to Count de Vergennes, giving reasons for thus abruptly closing the way to negotiation. Dr. Franklin, on his side, however, viewed these movements with more or less dissatisfaction, as too distrustful of the French, and too captious with the English. Nobody was left in Europe with power to settle this difference but Mr. Adams, and he was yet at the Hague, so deeply engaged in his special duties as to be unwilling to leave them for what

seemed, at best, a very uncertain overture. Letters had already passed between him and Mr. Jay, in which he had expressed his sentiments decisively. Whilst he had entirely accorded with that gentleman in refusing to accept the language of Oswald's commission, he suggested a modification by which the difficulty might be removed.[1] As it stood, the king assumed that he was to treat only with colonies or individuals. But if, instead of this, the commission should confer authority to treat with the ministers of "the United States of America," that would be acknowledgment enough for him to begin with. The same sentiment had been expressed by him in a letter written to Dr. Franklin on the 2d of May preceding.[2] Mr. Jay ultimately adopted this idea. It was then submitted to Mr. Oswald, who cheerfully welcomed it, and sent it, together with a copy of Mr. Jay's argument, furnished to him for the purpose, by a courier to London, for the decision of his government.

In the mean while, Benjamin Vaughan, Lord Shelburne's secret agent, had been improving his time in sounding the disposition of Franklin and of Jay, and in communicating the result of his observations to his anxious principal. With the former, as an old acquaintance not entirely unapprised of his relations with the minister, he labored assiduously in smoothing down what seemed obstacles in the way of reconciliation, whilst he so far won the confidence of Jay as to obtain from him, to his great joy, a special commission to wait upon Lord Shelburne in person, and urge him to acquiesce in making the concession demanded. This was on the 9th of September. Mr. Jay, however, in soliciting this, does not seem to have known that Shelburne had sent Vaughan to Paris, nor that a letter had already gone from Vaughan by Oswald's courier, earnestly exhorting Shelburne to grant what had been asked.

One reason given for this urgency by Mr. Vaughan is too remarkable to be omitted in this biography. He had found the two commissioners so well disposed, that he considered it safer to hurry the negotiations whilst they were here alone, than to await the arrival of Mr. Adams and Mr. Laurens, from whose ill-will he apprehended much embarrassment. The day before the departure of Mr. Vaughan, a secret and confidential dis-

[1] Letter to J. Jay, 10 August, 1782, vol. vii. p. 606.
[2] Vol. vii. p. 580.

patch of Barbé de Marbois, secretary of the French legation, who had been sent out to the United States with the Chevalier de la Luzerne, to Count de Vergennes, which had been intercepted by the British, was put into Mr. Jay's hands. It revealed something of the general course of the French policy, such as it had been ever since M. Gérard had initiated it at Philadelphia, marking out the Eastern States, and Samuel Adams, in particular, as unreasonable in their pretensions for the fisheries, and leaning strongly to the members of the more southern States, as in harmony with France. The object of this disclosure on the part of England was to make Mr. Jay willing to surrender his objection to immediate negotiation on the terms of Oswald's commission. Its effect was directly the reverse of this, for Mr. Jay made it the basis of the strongest representations, communicated through Mr. Vaughan to Lord Shelburne, to secure the modification which was required. It was this last view, reinforced by the written representations made before, and the verbal communication held after Mr Vaughan's arrival in England, which probably turned the scale in favor of the concession.

Mr. Vaughan left Paris on the 11th of September. By his own account it appears that the cabinet decision was made whilst he was in London.[1] Four days before his departure,

[1] The contrary is affirmed by Mr. Sparks. *Dipl. Corr. of the Revolution*, vol. viii. p. 211. On the other hand, Dr. Gordon says that Mr. Vaughan wrote in advance to Lord Shelburne a request that he should enter into no business with De Rayneval, till he had first seen him. *History*, vol. iv. p. 337. Mr. Jay likewise affirms that a letter to that effect was written by Vaughan *at his instance*. *Dipl. Corr.* vol. viii. p. 165. This fact is not, however, mentioned in the papers of Mr. Vaughan, from which the statement in the text is made. He only says that "*while he was in London*, the business of M. Rayneval and the amendment to the commission under the great seal to Mr. Oswald took place." The decision of the cabinet was not made before the 14th or later than the 20th September, as appears from Secretary Townshend's letter to Mr. Oswald of the last date, announcing it. Mr. Vaughan was in London during that period. The amended commission is dated the 21st. There appears to be very little ground for the inference drawn by Mr. Sparks that De Rayneval's representations had an effect in bringing about the change. The question scarcely depended on his agency either way.

It is in no disposition to detract from the valuable services rendered to the revolutionary history by Mr. Sparks, that a doubt may be permitted whether a national publication, like the "Diplomatic Correspondence," is the right medium through which to disseminate arguments and inferences to sustain any peculiar views of the action of these times. Of the two extremes, the course adopted by Mr. Force, in the "American Archives," of literally adhering even to obvious errors, seems the safest and the most satisfactory.

another secret agent had been dispatched from the French capital, under an assumed name, on an errand of still greater importance. This was no less a person than Gérard de Rayneval, a *premier commis* in the department of Count de Vergennes, a brother of M. Gérard, who had been in the same department, and had conducted the earlier negotiations with the United States, and, like him, possessed of the principles with a great share of the confidence of his chief. Of this mission, not a hint had been given by the Count either to Dr. Franklin or to Mr. Jay. The latter learned it from other persons the very day before Marbois' intercepted letter came into his hands. The suspicions, that the two events coming so near together generated in his breast, of a design in the Count to defeat his purpose, and to persuade the British to adhere to their first commission, were natural, but they were not well founded. The construction gave much more importance to the objection, in the French view of it, than it really had. But the purpose of De Rayneval's mission was not less important for all that. The whole truth has never yet been disclosed concerning it, nor is it certain that it ever will be. De Rayneval, under his fictitious name, called privately upon Lord Shelburne, who seems, for a time, to have kept the information of the visit secret from all his colleagues. There are reasons to suppose that some irregular interference had occurred with the ministerial policy, which had so far confirmed the French court in its suspicions of duplicity in Lord Shelburne as to justify a demand of a direct explanation.

These suspicions had grown out of the reception, through the hands of the liberated Count de Grasse, of a mysterious note, containing certain propositions, purporting to come from Lord Shelburne. The nature of this message, which has never been disclosed, seems to have excited no less surprise than the channel through which it was received. It was the business of De Rayneval to ascertain what it meant, and whether Lord Shelburne had really authorized it. In case of disavowal, his instructions were to return forthwith. But before leaving, he was at liberty to make an opening for such further communications as the minister might be disposed to make, touching his views of the proposed negotiations. Accordingly, after the disavowal, a general examination ensued of the points which should

serve as a basis for a treaty, so far as France was concerned. Beyond these, when pressed to answer, he declared himself without authority to speak. For example, when Shelburne expressed a hope that France would not sustain the American claim to the fisheries, Rayneval replied that "he might venture to say, the king would never support unjust demands; that he was not able to judge whether those of the Americans were of that kind or not; and that, besides, he was without authority in this respect." And afterwards, when Shelburne alluded, in the same way, to the American claims of boundaries, Rayneval fell back into the same guarded strain.

The natural inference of an acute statesman from the tone taken by Rayneval could scarcely be other than that perseverance against the American demands would not be objected to by France; an inference, the justice of which receives great confirmation from the fact, now well known, that Rayneval had already officially done what he could to persuade Mr. Jay to give way to Spain on one point, the southern boundary, and that he afterwards equally urged concession to Great Britain in the matter of the fisheries and the northern boundary. These were the two points in the American negotiation, the fisheries and the boundaries, in which France took pains to declare that she had no interest; the very same points, it should be recollected, which M. Gérard had labored so hard to expunge as *ultimata* from the original instructions given to Mr. Adams; and to which M. Marbois, in his intercepted letter, had alluded as unreasonably insisted upon in America. It may fairly be presumed, then, that one of the purposes of De Rayneval's visit was to give the British incidentally to understand how France felt about them, without committing herself by any overt act. But with regard to the question upon which Mr. Jay had fixed his suspicions, it involved an object which had been from the first directly interesting to France. De Rayneval was not tied up so cautiously here, and he therefore urged upon the prime minister a concession in this respect to the demands of the Americans. There is no evidence to show that his action, in this point, had any effect, independent of the representations which were pressing upon Lord Shelburne from Mr. Vaughan, Mr. Oswald, and Mr. Jay. What he gained by his expedition, was the answer he was instructed to ob-

tain, disavowing the message through De Grasse, and a more perfect apprehension of those points which might constitute the serious obstacles to a pacification. Among these, neither the American claim to the fisheries nor to the boundaries was to be ranked, so far, at least, as France had any hand in the negotiation. They were yet held in abeyance, waiting for the period when it might be necessary to deal with Spain as well as with England. In accordance with this understanding, a note was made of the English proposals, which received the sanction of the cabinet, and was then carried, by M. de Rayneval, back to Paris.

From this statement of facts, it appears that although Mr. Jay was in error in suspecting Rayneval to be charged with a commission to thwart him in his demand of the recognition of American independence, a result which had been a principal object of the war on the part of France, and which fell in with her general European policy, he was not so much mistaken in regard to the disposition, rather betrayed than expressed, upon the secondary points in the negotiation. Without uttering a single word that could be used to commit him or his government with America, M. de Rayneval had succeeded in making Lord Shelburne comprehend that France was not inclined to prolong the war by supporting America in *unjust* claims. What sense M. de Rayneval himself attached to the word *unjust*, will appear as the negotiations proceed.

This was the first of three trips made during this period by De Rayneval to England. On the other hand, Mr. Vaughan, who had been the bearer of Mr. Jay's message to Lord Shelburne, was again on his way back to Paris, charged to continue his confidential labors with the American commissioners, and accompanied by the courier bearing Mr. Oswald's amended commission. The obstacles to negotiation being now all removed, the parties, consisting of Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay on one side, and Mr. Oswald on the other, prepared themselves for the task of constructing the basis of a pacification.

Of all the surprising incidents in this remarkable war, nothing now seems so difficult to account for as the mode in which Great Britain pursued her objects by negotiation. The person first selected to cope with the ablest of French diplomatists was a young man who had never had experience in public

life outside of Great Britain. The individual pitched upon to deal with the United States was a respectable and amiable private gentleman, nominated at the suggestion of Dr. Franklin, with whom he was to treat, because the Doctor thought he would get along easily with him, but by no means a match for a combination of three such men as Franklin, Jay, and John Adams. In order to be upon equal terms with them, Great Britain had need of the best capacity and experience within her borders. But it was her fortune, during all this period, and, indeed, almost to the present day, to insist upon underrating the people with whom she had to do, because they had been her dependents; a mistake which has been productive of more unfortunate consequences to herself than an age of repentance can repair.

The first instance of this took place on the preparation of a basis, made out of a project suggested by Dr. Franklin whilst he was alone at Paris, to which Mr. Oswald was persuaded to give his assent so far as to send it home for the consideration of his government. This basis was formed of three propositions. The first acknowledged the independence, and defined the boundaries of the United States. The second provided for the continued use of the fisheries by the people of both countries, in the manner that had been practised before the last war between France and England. The third admitted the free navigation of the Mississippi, and placed trade on the most liberal footing of reciprocity. The United States could, in all reason, ask little more of any nation; and at bottom there was no more than, with a comprehensive view of national policy, Great Britain would have found it for her interest to grant. But neither sovereign, ministers, nor people in that country were at all prepared for what appeared to them such extravagant liberality. To avert the possibility of a similar error, a new person, fresh from the bureau of the foreign office, and experienced in business, Mr. Henry Strachey, was selected and dispatched to assist Mr. Oswald. In other words, the English position was to be fortified by a little more obstinacy. The instructions with which he was charged were to insist upon indemnity for the refugees, to narrow the line of boundaries, and to cut off the reciprocity of the fisheries and of trade.

This arrival gave another turn to the negotiation. And a

new element came in to add a shade of gloom. Simultaneously with the mission of Mr. Strachey, designed to give a higher tone to the British demands, Mr. Jay held a conference with M. de Rayneval, in which it soon appeared that so far from retaining the inability to judge of the merits of the American demands, which he had professed in the conference a short month before with Lord Shelburne, he had no scruples in expressing his positive opinion that they were ill founded and should be materially curtailed. If "ill founded," of course they were "unjust." This related to both the questions, that on the fisheries as well as that on the boundaries. And with regard to the latter, his arguments, which had on a former occasion been applied to restrict them on the south and west, were now directed, in the same spirit, towards the north and east. Inasmuch as M. de Rayneval was well understood to be possessed of the entire confidence of Count de Vergennes, extending, as it proved, even to the intrusting him with the successive missions to Great Britain, each of them vitally important to the pacification, it is not to be wondered at, if Mr. Jay drew some inferences of his own as to the nature of the advice which the head of the department would give, in the contingency of the Americans being obliged to ask it for their government, in the negotiation.

It was precisely at this moment that Mr. Adams, having completed his business in Holland, arrived to take his place in the commission. His advent seems to have been viewed with equal uneasiness by the agents of England and of France. Mr. Vaughan had been imploring his principal to make haste in order "to get out of the reach of interruption from Mr. Adams." For he was not softened, like Franklin, by English connections or conversation,[1] and he was "very warm and ambitious," so that Mr. Vaughan would not answer for the mischief he might do, if there should be a delay. On the other hand, M. de Rayneval, in alluding to the fisheries, had freely expressed to Mr. Jay his fears of "the ambition and restless views of Mr.

[1] It would appear from Mr. Vaughan's letters that William Temple Franklin, then secretary to the commission, had been indiscreet enough to urge a recommendation of his father, Governor Franklin, to the favor of the British premier. Mr Vaughan, taking the hint, repeatedly pressed Lord Shelburne to provide for him, for the sake of the effect it might have on the negotiation. There is no reason to suppose that Dr. Franklin had the remotest suspicion of this intrigue.

Adams." The coincidence of this sentiment with that expressed in the letter of Marbois of the temper of Samuel Adams, must not be overlooked in this connection. The probability is that both the Adamses were classed, in the French mind, under the same head, as their policy had been identical. On the other hand, Mr. Adams felt, on his arrival, the most profound anxiety respecting his own position. He stood between two colleagues in the commission, with neither of whom he had heretofore entirely sympathized. He had concurred as little with the views of domestic policy held in congress by Mr. Jay, as with the foreign system adopted by Dr. Franklin. His most secret feelings are portrayed in his "Diary" for the 27th of October. He already knew that the two were not agreed upon the course proper now to be taken, and that in taking a side one way or the other, he should be assuming the responsibility of the action that would follow; but he had yet no means to ascertain how far the conclusion arrived at might be one to which he should be ready to give a hearty and cordial support.

An occasion for determining this point was at hand. The instructions of congress, given to the American commissioners under the instigation of the French court, were absolute and imperative, "to undertake nothing without the knowledge and concurrence of that court, and ultimately to govern themselves by their advice and opinion." These orders, transmitted at the time of the enlargement of the commission, had just been reinforced by assurances given to quiet the uneasiness created in France by the British overtures through Governor Carleton. Thus far, although the commissioners had felt them to be derogatory to the honor of their country, as well as to their own character as its representatives, there had been no necessity for action either under or against them. But now that matters were coming to the point of a serious negotiation, and the secondary questions of interest to America were to be determined, especially those to which France had shown herself indifferent, not to say adverse, it seemed as if no chance remained of escaping a decision. Mr. Jay, jealous of the mission of De Rayneval, of which not a hint had been dropped by the French court, suspicious of its good faith from the disclosures of the remarkable dispatch of Marbois, and fearful of any advice like that of which he had received a foretaste through M. de

Rayneval, at the same time provoked that the confidence expected should be all on one side, the Count communicating nothing of the separate French negotiation, came to the conclusion that the interests of America were safest when retained in American hands. He therefore declared himself in favor of going on to treat with Great Britain, without consulting the French court. Dr. Franklin, on the other hand, expressing his confidence in that court, secured by his sense of the steady reception of benefits by his country, signified his willingness to abide by the instructions he had received. Yet it is a singular fact, but lately disclosed, that, notwithstanding this general feeling, which was doubtless sincerely entertained, Dr. Franklin had been the first person to violate those instructions, at the very inception of the negotiations, by proposing to Lord Shelburne the cession of Canada, and covering his proposal with an earnest injunction to keep it secret from France, because of his belief that she was adverse to the measure.[1] A similar secret and confidential communication he promised to make to Thomas Grenville, until diverted from his purpose, as Grenville inferred, by the interposition of Oswald in the negotiation. Oswald himself, so early as the 11th of July, had reported to Lord Shelburne Franklin's desire to treat *and end* with Great Britain on a separate footing from the other powers. From all this evidence it may fairly be inferred that, whatever Franklin might have been disposed to believe of the French court, his instincts were too strong to enable him to trust them implicitly with the care of interests purely American.

And, in this, there can be no reasonable cause for doubt that he was right. The more full the disclosures have been of the French policy from their confidential papers, the more do they show Count de Vergennes assailing England in America, with quite as fixed a purpose as ever Chatham had to conquer America in Germany. Mr. Adams had no doubt of it. He had never seen any signs of a disposition to aid the United

[1] This is stated by Thomas Grenville as disclosed to him by Mr. Oswald. The injunction, probably, was the reason of Lord Shelburne's withholding the knowledge of the proposal from the cabinet, whilst the disclosure of his reception of it, made by Oswald to Grenville, and by the latter, in turn, to Mr. Fox, gave rise to the suspicions of Shelburne's good faith, which ultimately dispersed the Rockingham ministry, and led to many important consequences.
Russell's *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, vol. i. p. 363. Also, p. 376.

States from affection or sympathy. On the contrary, he had perceived their cause everywhere made subordinate to the general considerations of continental politics. Perhaps his impressions at some moments carried him even further, and led him to suspect in the Count a positive desire to check and depress America. In this he fell into the natural mistake of exaggerating the importance of his own country. In the great game of nations which was now playing at Paris under the practised eye of France's chief, (for Count de Maurepas was no longer living,) the United States probably held a relative position, in his mind, not higher than that of a pawn, or possibly a knight, on a chess table. Whilst his attention was absorbed in arranging the combinations of several powers, it necessarily followed that he had not the time to devote to any one, which its special representative might imagine to be its due. But even this hypothesis was to Mr. Adams justification quite sufficient for declining to submit the interests of his country implicitly to the Count's control. If not so material in the Count's eyes, the greater the necessity of keeping them in his own care. He therefore seized the first opportunity to announce to his colleagues his preference for the views of Mr. Jay. After some little reflection, Dr. Franklin signified his acquiescence in this decision. His objections to it had doubtless been increased by the peculiar relations he had previously sustained to the French court, and by a very proper desire to be released from the responsibility of what might from him be regarded as a discourteous act. No such delicacy was called for on the part of the other commissioners. Neither does it appear that Count de Vergennes manifested a sign of discontent with them at the time. He saw that little confidence was placed in him, but he does not seem to have made the slightest effort to change the decision or even to get an explanation of it. The truth is, that the course thus taken had its conveniences for him, provided only that the good faith of the American negotiators, not to make a separate peace, could be depended upon. Neither did he ever affect to complain of it, excepting at one particular moment when he thought he had cause for apprehending that the support he relied on might fail.

This important preliminary having been thus settled, nothing remained but to come to an understanding at once with Great Britain upon the points already made. These were simple

enough. The boundaries, the fisheries, the recovery of British debts, and some provision for the refugees, made up the whole. Mr. Strachey, who had been sent from England for the purpose of stiffening the easy nature of Mr. Oswald, succeeded only in infusing into the conferences all the asperity which they ever betrayed. It does not fall within the scope of this work to follow up the narrative of the negotiation further than is necessary to elucidate the precise share of it belonging to Mr. Adams. Down to this time his interposition had been effective in two particulars; first, as to the precise shape of Mr. Oswald's commission, upon which the negotiation was opened; secondly, as to the assumption of the responsibility of proceeding without consultation with France. The articles, upon which to treat as a basis, had been agreed upon before his arrival. They were entirely satisfactory to him, so that he entered into the treaty only at that stage in which Mr. Strachey appeared, demanding adverse modifications for the British cabinet. No moment could have been more happily chosen for reinforcing the arguments already presented by Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay. Upon the question of the northern and eastern boundary, which the British were attempting to push back to the Penobscot, he came fully prepared with materials especially confided to him by his own State of Massachusetts, intended to establish her rights as far as the St. Croix and the highlands, the ancient bounds of Nova Scotia.[1] In the matter of the claims of indemnity, he suggested the very proper concession of acknowledging the just debts contracted before the Revolution, and opening the American courts to the full recovery of them, which furnished the British government some grounds at home for concluding the treaty, without which it is doubtful whether they could have ventured on it at all.

The third and the most delicate point was that relating to the fisheries. It was here, and here alone, that there was any appearance of a conflict of interests with France, which was likewise negotiating with Great Britain on that subject; and it was here that was shown the greatest reluctance to concede any thing to America. On this point the two other

[1] Some further details concerning the discussion of the boundary question, taken from Mr. Adams's letters to the Boston Patriot, are placed in the Appendix, C.

commissioners had been tenacious, without making it a vital element of the treaty. Mr. Adams insisted upon an acknowledgment of the right of fishery as indispensable to the durability of any compact that could be made. After a succession of elaborate conferences and mutual propositions, a new set of articles was finally prepared, and sent, by the hands of Mr. Strachey, to England, for the approbation of the cabinet. But so little were they to the taste of that gentleman, that he left behind him a note for the American commissioners, intimating, in a manner not the most courteous, that unless they should immediately reconsider their denial of indemnity to the refugees, and furnish him with the evidence of it before he got to London, little prospect remained of a favorable result from his journey. But neither conciliation nor menaces could avail to shake them from the position which Dr. Franklin had been the most strenuous in assuming. They replied, but not in the way Mr. Strachey desired. The letter and the mode of action both bear the characteristic marks of Dr. Franklin. The real answer, addressed to Mr. Oswald, although firm in its refusal, abounded in terms of kindness and conciliation to him, which were made the more emphatic by contrast with the cold ceremonious note to Mr. Strachey, inclosing the paper for his information.

This was on the 6th of November. It was the 25th before the gentleman returned. In the meanwhile the indefatigable Vaughan, not content with writing to Lord Shelburne a series of letters, urging, with great good sense and solid statesmanship, the expediency of yielding a little more on the disputed points, acceded to the desires of the Americans, and once more crossed the channel to reinforce his representations by personal conference. He had seen the unfortunate effect of the interposition of Mr. Strachey at Paris, and dreading the consequences, in widening the breach, of the report that gentleman was likely to make, he left Paris on the 17th, with the hope of counteracting it. Before he reached London, however, the cabinet had decided upon their course, which was to persevere on the main points, but not to break off the negotiation in case the Americans should remain firm. After a confidential interview with Shelburne, in which he was made acquainted with his views, Mr. Vaughan once more followed Strachey back to Paris, arriving there three days after him, and two days before the decisive conference on the 29th of November.

Later disclosures of the secret influences operating upon the prime minister's position, at this time, sufficiently explain the reasons of his course. A peace had become a matter of necessity. No other escape from the difficulties with which he was surrounded, seemed to present itself. On the one side was the condition of Ireland, and the urgency of the Marquis of Buckingham, then the Lord Lieutenant, that something should be done to redeem his engagements to that country;[1] on the other, the ill-reconciled assemblage within the cabinet, all its members equally feeling that the king himself was scarcely to be depended on from day to day. It may be doubted whether a more distracted state of things ever existed in the councils of that country. And to lead out of the confusion, no clue was so tangible as a peace. It is however doing no more than justice to Lord Shelburne to add that his judgment and his line of policy led him the same way. He felt, and justly felt, that a further perseverance in the war was idle. In comparison with the object of peace, the concession required was insignificant, and no sacrifice was made by it, excepting one of pride. But to the American commissioners, little informed of the true state of things in London, the interval of Mr. Strachey's absence had been one of no little anxiety. No better evidence of this can be supplied than that of Mr. Adams in his "Diary." It must have been then a moment of great interest to them, when they learned that the expected answer had arrived.

The conferences were resumed on the 25th of November, and Mr. Strachey appeared once more. His tone was apparently but little changed. The ministry, he said, continued dissatisfied with the refusal of a provision for the Tories, and they required modifications of the article on the fisheries. On the boundaries alone were they disposed to concede. But discouraging as this announcement seemed, it was actually more than compensated by the introduction of Mr. Fitzherbert, to whom the negotiation with France had already been intrusted, as an assistant to

[1] The influence of this cause upon the American question has come to light in the confidential letters of W. W. Grenville, afterwards Lord Grenville, addressed to his brother, the Lord Lieutenant. He reports Lord Shelburne as admitting to him that "the situation of Ireland weighed very materially with him in his wishes for peace." The reason why may be fully understood by examining Grenville's letters at large. *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George the Third*, vol. i. pp. 66–136.

Mr. Oswald. The discussions which ensued for the next four days, were long, animated, and often vehement. The great struggle was upon the fisheries. Great Britain was willing to concede the use on the high seas as a privilege, whilst she denied it altogether within its three miles' jurisdiction on the coasts. America, on the other hand, claimed the former as a right, and asked for the privilege of the latter. Here was the place at which Mr. Adams assumed the greatest share of responsibility in the negotiation. He insisted upon placing the two countries exactly on a level in regard to the right to the fishery, a claim, the justice of which few, at this day, would be found to dispute. The energy and effect of his representations, on this point, are so well shown in his "Diary" as to render it unnecessary to dwell further on them here.[1] He further claimed for his countrymen a liberty to cure and dry fish on the unsettled regions of British America, and a privilege of the same kind in the settled parts, with the consent of the proprietors.

These propositions he put in writing in a paper which, on the 29th, he proposed to the conference as an article to be inserted in the treaty. The paper was then subjected to a critical examination, in the course of which many alterations and some limitations were agreed to, but the substance remained unchanged. It was at this stage that the British commissioners made their last demonstration. Mr. Strachey proposed that the word "*right*," in its connection with the entire fishery, should be changed into "*liberty*." And Mr. Fitzherbert sustained the movement by remarking that "right" was an obnoxious expression. The suggestion seems to have fired Mr. Adams, and immediately he burst into an earnest and overwhelming defence of the term he had chosen. The British commissioners, not prepared to resist the argument, proposed to sign the preliminaries, leaving this question to be adjusted at the definitive treaty. But neither would Mr. Adams consent to this. He rose, and with the concentrated power which he possessed when excited, declared that when first commissioned as a negotiator with Great Britain, his country had ordered him to make no peace without a clear acknowledgment of the *right* to the fishery, and by that direction he would stand. No preliminaries should have his sig-

[1] See the *Diary*, vol. iii. pp. 333–335.

nature without it. And here he appealed, with some adroitness, to Mr. Laurens, who had just taken his place in the commission, and who happened to have been president of congress at the time when that first commission was given. Mr. Laurens had likewise been in sympathy with the original movement that produced the commission, so that he readily responded to the call, and seconded the position with characteristic warmth. And Mr. Jay, without committing himself to an equal extent, virtually threw his weight into the scale.

This act was the assumption of another prodigious responsibility. For the powers to treat on commerce, in which the instructions referred to were inserted, had in the interval been revoked by congress, and the right to the fisheries, although adhered to in argument, had been abandoned as an ultimatum. But Mr. Adams, knowing that these things had been gained from congress by the importunity of the French ministry, and feeling in the depths of his soul a conviction that his country's interests were safest under his guardianship, ventured to risk a direct appeal to the British commissioners to concede this point rather than put at hazard the reconciliation. The stroke proved decisive. The term of persistence, dictated to the British by their government, had been reached; and after consultation, they announced their readiness to abide by Mr. Adams's article as it stood. Such a victory is not often recorded in the annals of diplomacy.

That the effect thus produced by Mr. Adams was not entirely the result of his action at the last conference, but had been gradually forming in the course of his conversations with the British commissioners, and especially with Mr. Oswald, is proved by the evidence of that gentleman himself in a remarkable paper which he seems to have drawn up for the use of Mr. Strachey in case any justification of the concession should be necessary at home. It is in the form of a postscript to a letter, dated the 8th of January, 1783, explanatory of the mode of conducting the Newfoundland fishery. This paper, as illustrating the conduct of Mr. Adams, on this subject, from a British point of view, is so material as to merit insertion here entire.

"I will next add what was settled as to what passed with the American commissioners, particularly Mr. Adams, (the New

England member,) when we came to treat of this article, and to propose keeping off the Americans to a distance from the shore, in the prosecution of their fishery, as well as drying their fish on the coast of Newfoundland.

"I had sundry conversations with this gentleman on the subject before you came over the last time; when his language was as follows: —

"That the fishery was their all, their bread. That other States had staples of production; they had none but what they raised out of the sea; that they had enjoyed a freedom of fishing time out of mind, and their people would never part with it; that in depriving them of the privilege in question, we should strike a deeper stroke into their vitals, than any, perhaps, they had suffered since the war commenced. That our refusal was unfriendly, ungenerous, insidious, since we could not come out in time to overtake them; and when we did come, we could not miss them, there being fish enough for all nations, during the whole time we chose to seek for them. But that we grudged that they should avail themselves of the natural conveniency of their situation, only to prevent our (the British) getting somewhat less for that part which it was convenient for us to undertake. That we made no difficulty in accommodating the French in this matter, which of itself would make their people more sensibly feel the effect of the exclusion. That his constituents were alarmed, and particularly attentive to this question; and sent him instructions that would by no means allow of his signing any treaty in which this privilege should be excepted.[1] That he would never sign any such treaty; that if he were to do so, he should consider it as signing a declaration of perpetual war between England and America. That if things were to come to the worst, their States would support that war of themselves, without the help of France or any other nation. That if we lost somewhat in the sales of our fish by their interfering with us, it would, in part, be made up in the sale of our (British) manufactures, since the more money they had for their fish, the more they would buy of these manufactures.

"These observations passed (as I have said) at different times

[1] This refers to the separate representations of Massachusetts, which were never varied or qualified.

in conversation with him, (Mr. Adams,) some part of which he also mentioned in your hearing.

"And you will remember the other commissioners were equally stiff in refusing to proceed in the treaty, while we proposed to deprive their people of the coast or inshore fishery.

"And also that one of these gentlemen said, that if we insisted on keeping their people at a distance of three leagues from our shores, we could not complain if they also forbad our ships from coming within the like distance of the coasts of the thirteen provinces.

"With respect to drying their fish, the same gentleman said he thought, if we would not allow of their landing upon the *unsettled* parts of our shore, at a certain season in the year, they would justly deny us the same privilege in all parts of their country.

"Another of these commissioners (who had all along expressed himself with great resentment at their people being thus unfavorably distinguished from the French) declared that it was a matter of indifference to them as to what prohibitions we should put their people under, since they would easily make reprisals in another way to their advantage, by an act of navigation, that should exclude English ships forever from any participation in the American trade, either inwards or outwards.[1]

"In answer to all these arguments, (some of which, I have said, passed in your hearing,) you will remember, we had not much to oppose. We did not think it proper to insist on the right of the sovereignty of the coast; nor to say any thing as to how such a grant would affect the treaty with France; and, upon the whole, were confined to the single object of preventing quarrels among the fishermen, as the supposed consequence of allowing the Americans to come within three leagues of the shore of Newfoundland and other places.

"In answer to which Mr. Adams said, that he made little account of squabbles among fishermen, which were soon made up. But that quarrels between States were not so easily settled. And which were most likely to happen, since, when we came to send out men-of-war to watch in those seas, so as to keep their ships to the precise distance of three leagues (and which

[1] Mr. Vaughan, among whose papers this letter is found, attributes these remarks to Mr. Laurens.

stations they must take in the earliest season in the spring) disputes might arise and men would be killed; and redress could be had only by appeals to government of either side. And, in the end, would be attended with such unpleasant consequences that he should be sorry it should ever happen. And would therefore advise, that we should overlook the loss we apprehended by their interference in the early part of the fishery, and end the matter so as that people should not be put in mind, on all occasions, that they were not Englishmen.

"The above is the substance of what the American commissioners said, at different times, upon the unpleasant subject of this intended exclusion, and as near their words as I can remember. I had put them in writing, from time to time, as they occurred in my conversation with the commissioners; and when you (Mr. Strachey) came over and showed me the altered plan of the treaty, and how the article was guarded in all the instructions and letters, I own I despaired of any settlement with America before the meeting of parliament. But there being, happily, a discretionary power, as well regarding the extent as the manner of dispensing with this article, in your instructions, I used the freedom of pointing it out, and insisting on it. And you, very properly, (as well as Mr. Fitzherbert,) took the benefit of it, and gave your consent to my signing the treaty. To which, if there is still any objection, I must take my share of the blame, as I took the liberty of mentioning to the secretary of state, in the letter which I troubled you with upon your return to London.

"If your wishing for this paper is to answer some purpose in parliament, in case of challenge on this head, you can judge what parts will be suitable to be brought under public review. Perhaps not many. The best general one is, that, without giving way in this particular, *there would have been no provisional articles.* That is very certain."

The right to the fisheries, considered as a resource for the subsistence of the people of New England, has gradually lost its importance in the progress of time. But whether it be regarded as an attribute of sovereignty indispensable to the completeness of the independence of a nation bordering on the great oceans of the globe, or as a school of discipline for a maritime people, the estimate of it remains undiminished down to this

day. The prediction made by Mr. Adams, that so long as there should remain an opening for a question of the exercise of this right, just so long would there be danger of a renewal of the conflict with Great Britain, has been verified by later events. But it has only been within a very late period that the good sense and practical wisdom of both nations, stimulated by the increasing danger of collisions between them, have so far overcome the illiberal theories of the last century, as to sweep away all remnants of exclusiveness in the enjoyment of what was evidently designed by Providence as the reward of enterprise alone. Proximity is an advantage of which the subjects of Great Britain enjoy their full share, and on neither side can it be a just cause of complaint. The good use that may be made of it should depend upon the skill and adventure of those who choose to try this field of exertion, and not upon mere claims of exclusive property, resting upon no permanent foundation whatever.

One other obstacle had been in the way, the more difficult to remove, that it rested on a point of honor in the British heart. Those individuals who had taken the side of the mother country in the colonies, and who, for doing so, had been subjected to the mortification, disasters, and personal losses consequent upon a failure to reëstablish her authority, naturally looked to her to protect their rights, in any and every attempt that might be made at accommodation. And this was a valid claim on her, in spite of the fact that the difficulties into which the mother country had fallen, were mainly owing to the interested misrepresentations made by leading persons of this class in America. On this point, the instructions to obtain an acknowledgment of their claims to indemnity, had been most positive. But the American commissioners, on their side, well knowing the impossibility of reconciling their countrymen to the acknowledgment of such odious pretensions, and little disposed themselves to recognize their validity, manifested no inclination to concede any thing beyond what the strict rule of justice would demand. Here Dr. Franklin took the lead; finding that the British were about to urge their views on this subject and the fisheries together, he prepared an article, making, by way of set-off, a counter-claim of compensation for the severe and not infrequently wanton injuries inflicted upon the patriots by the British

troops. Neither did this lose force by its reference to the voluntary acts of those very adherents to the British cause, whose pretensions were set up for consideration. The fact that this contest had, in many of its parts, been marked with the most painful characteristics of civil convulsion, in the course of which the parties had suffered shocking outrages from each other, was too well known to be denied. And the wounds were too fresh to permit the supposition that the victorious side would be prepared at once to replace in their former position those of their brethren, who had not only forfeited their confidence by joining the oppressor, but had been guilty of the greatest barbarities in conducting the struggle. The earnest and strenuous resistance of Dr. Franklin, reinforced by the representations of the other commissioners, at last produced an effect in convincing the British envoys that further urgency in their behalf was useless. To prolong the war a single day only for their sakes, without prospect of a better result, was obviously a waste of means which might be better employed in supplying the very remuneration which was now in agitation. The good sense of Mr. Fitzherbert, confirming that of Mr. Oswald, prevailed, and this troublesome discussion was finally terminated by the preparation of two articles, to which all agreed, providing that further hostility to the Tories should cease, and that congress should earnestly recommend to the States the restitution of their estates to such persons as could be proved to be real British subjects, and such Americans as had not borne arms against the United States.

The difficulties, on both sides, being thus finally removed, the negotiators on the 30th of November, 1782, signed their names to the preliminary articles of a peace. These were made contingent upon the general pacification, the negotiations for which were now in full activity between the three great powers, but they were signed without the knowledge of the French court. They were, however, communicated to the Count de Vergennes immediately after the signature, who then manifested no dissatisfaction to the commissioners,[1] but, on the contrary, commended their management, and signified his opinion that the greatest difficulty in the way of a general peace, the

[1] Franklin's *Works*, vol. ix. p. 442.

acknowledgment of American Independence, was now removed. Fifteen days elapsed, and his tone had undergone a very great change. He then addressed to Dr. Franklin, who had announced his intention to dispatch immediately to the United States a vessel with the interesting intelligence, and had offered to him the use of the same opportunity, an indignant remonstrance against the proceeding, as a breach of the agreement between the two countries. He particularly complained that the commissioners had been in such haste to send home an account of their own acts, before assuring themselves of the conclusion of the French negotiation.

Two circumstances are particularly deserving of notice here. One, that so many days had been suffered to elapse before any cause of dissatisfaction was intimated; the other, that a complaint should have been made of the commissioners for not informing themselves of the state of a negotiation, no part of which was voluntarily communicated to them whilst it was going on. Of the details of their own proceedings, Count de Vergennes had been kept informed unofficially even by Mr. Adams himself, to whom he had expressed opinions favorable to the British pretensions on the great points of difficulty, but he seems never to have inclined to reciprocate any part of the confidence. Some explanation is then necessary for the altered language of the note of the 15th of December. It is, perhaps, to be found in a knowledge of the secret influences which had, in the interval, suddenly thrown a cloud over the pacification, and roused, in their full force, all the apprehensions entertained from the outset by the French minister of a reconciliation between Britain and America to be effected at the expense of the isolation of France.

As in the beginning, so throughout, to conciliate the intractable temper of Spain had made a cardinal point of the Count's policy. Her loudest outcry was for Gibraltar, without gratification in which she was very likely to stretch her pretensions over the southern borders of the United States and into the Mediterranean, a proceeding which would tend materially to complicate the chances of a pacification. Nor yet did she abstain from threatening that if France did not gain it for her, she would give her the British for neighbors by ceding the Spanish part of St. Domingo to them as the purchase-money.

But Gibraltar, even though Shelburne himself appeared not indisposed to yield it, was so fastened into the prejudices and pride of the British nation, that the good sense of Count de Vergennes early saw the futility of calculating upon its surrender. The only alternative was, to devise some exchange of equivalents between the three powers, with which Spain might be consoled for her disappointment. The mode of doing this had been entrusted to the confidential agency, once more, of the secretary, De Rayneval, who, with the son of De Vergennes and a Spanish secretary, had gone to London for the purpose of more speedily bringing it to a conclusion. It was just at the nick of time, when every thing seemed likely to be arranged, and when, after concessions wrung from all sides, the Count d'Aranda had assumed the responsibility of accepting the Floridas for Spain, that the news came of the signature of the preliminaries by the Americans. For a moment there was chaos in the British cabinet. The remainder of the Rockingham Whigs, headed by the Duke of Richmond, anxious to find an excuse for a breach with Lord Shelburne, which would send them back to their old associates, seized this opportunity to declare their opposition to closing with France; and the idea was started, either by them or, what is more likely, by the king's peculiar friends, of the possibility, in conjunction with the United States, of continuing the war with her.

This it was which roused the suspicions in the minds of the French,[1] that the American commissioners might have precipitated a signature of their preliminaries with the view of facilitating such a combination. Hence the sudden change in the language of De Vergennes, perhaps quickened by his sense of the existence of a party in the French cabinet exerting itself to defeat his policy, and thus effect his own fall. There was, however, not a shadow of foundation for any calculations of the kind; a fact which Lord Shelburne and Thomas Townshend, the secretary, knew too certainly to be in the least moved by the flurry among their colleagues. The former had been regularly

[1] Flassan, t. vii. p. 353. De Sevelinges, Introduction to the French translation of Botta, tom. i. p. lvii. The latter writer affirms that this plan was concerted with some Americans. Whether he found such an intimation in M. Gérard's papers, from which he wrote his account, does not appear. It was natural for the minister to suspect it.

and industriously supplied by his private agent, Mr. Vaughan, with such minute information respecting the thoughts and feelings of the American commissioners, as to preclude all doubt in his mind of their fixed intention to abide by the alliance with France. His convictions were finally wrung from him in parliament, in his admission that the signature of the preliminaries with America would have been of no effect, unaccompanied by a peace with France. It was impossible to overcome the weight of this evidence; so the cabinet and the nation relapsed into a sullen acquiescence in the march of the general pacification. And with the removal of this obstacle, the alarm of Count de Vergennes became quieted, so that nothing further was heard from him concerning the matter. Not four weeks elapsed from the date of his remonstrance, before he and Mr. Fitzherbert set their hands and seals to the preliminaries of a treaty, which, in conjunction with a similar agreement with Spain, executed at the same time, gave full force to the American articles, and thus put an end to any further doubt that the time had at last arrived when the United States were, by common consent, to be enrolled in the list of the principalities of the earth.

Count de Vergennes had taken advantage of Dr. Franklin's civility in offering to transmit his dispatches to America with his own, to send to M. de la Luzerne instructions to express to congress the displeasure of France with the separate action of their commissioners. This once more revived, though in a very qualified form, the party conflicts of the earlier period of the commission. The clause of the instructions, which directed them to be governed by the opinion and advice of the French minister, had not been the offspring of any spontaneous popular sentiment. It sprang from the distrust Count de Vergennes felt of his ability to control Mr. Adams, and the suspicions he entertained of his disposition to treat separately with Britain. This had prompted the instructions to Luzerne, which had extorted from a reluctant majority in congress the revocation of the powers to negotiate a treaty of commerce, the addition of four other persons in the commission for the peace, the retraction of all *ultimata* except independence, and last of all, this substitution of the dubious good-will of a minister of a European power in the place of the discretion, the

wisdom, and the integrity of some of the noblest men whom the great struggle had produced. The manner by which this last act was brought about, has been already explained. It had never been heartily concurred in. At two several periods, efforts had been made to rescind it, which were defeated only by the feeblest considerations of sectional jealousy,[1] and the private remonstrances of the emissaries of France. Hence, when the complaint of the violation of this instruction by the commissioners came at the same time with the news that preliminaries had been actually signed, it met with little real disposition in congress to respond to it. Those who had voted for it well knew that their act itself, if called into question, would have needed more explanation and defence before the people of the States than they were prepared to give, especially in the face of the fact, which the commissioners had to present, that the great objects of the war had all been gained in spite of it. They were, therefore, content to let the matter subside as quietly as a decent regard to the source of the application would permit.

The odious restriction had been received by Mr. Jay and Mr. Adams with the most painful and indignant sensations. The latter, who got the intelligence just on the eve of his entrance into the negotiation, was impelled by it at once to address to Secretary Livingston a letter, resigning all his employments in Europe. A few hours of reflection, however, sufficed to show him the folly of such precipitation. If the issue should prove that there was a disposition on the part of France to surrender any important interests of his country, his resignation would only remove one more barrier to the execution of the plan. If, on the other hand, no such disposition should prevail, there was no occasion of apprehending difficulty from the instructions. Besides, such an act, on his part, at such a critical moment, had too much the appearance of deserting a post of the highest responsibility, which his experience in Europe had fitted him to occupy much better than any new man could. Reasoning thus, he omitted from the official copy of his dispatch[2] the record of his hasty determination, and made up his mind to act without

[1] *Madison Papers*, vol. i. p. 241. The strong feeling of Gouverneur Morris is expressed in his letter to Mr. Jay. Jay's *Life of Jay*, vol. i. p. 130.

[2] The passage remains in his letter-book.

fear of consequences, regulated by this instruction only so far as it should go hand in hand with his duty to protect his country. The responsibility was one from which nothing but a successful issue could redeem his reputation; but it was one, the assumption of which was entirely in harmony with the general spirit of his public life. He had done the same thing in the winter of 1775, when independence first came in question; and again in Holland, when he pressed for a categorical answer to his demand of recognition. He now felt his stake in the fortunes of his country to be incomparably greater than that of any representative of France, and therefore that the care of these should take precedence of every other consideration.

Entering with such feelings into the negotiation, the intercepted dispatch of Marbois was put into his hands at the same time that he heard of De Rayneval's mission to England, secretly undertaken by the French Court for purposes in no way hinted at to the Americans. Surely, these were not indications of a kind to establish confidence already impaired, or to show a willingness on the part of France to make common cause of American interests. They were of so decided a kind as to impose great caution in proceeding, as a positive duty. Neither was the tone of her official agents, on either side of the water, upon every question at issue in the negotiation on the part of America, calculated to reassure him. It was decidedly against her on the subject of the cession of Canada, a favorite object with Dr. Franklin and the Northern States. The reason is now disclosed to have been a desire to keep Great Britain as a check upon the United States in that quarter.[1] It was against her on the navigation of the Mississippi, equally a favorite object of the Southern States. The motive on this side was to keep open a mode of conciliating Spain. It was against her on the fisheries, the objection being there alone a rivalry of interests. And it was against her on the principle of refusing indemnity to the refugees, because that was viewed as a reasonable concession to Great Britain. These

[1] Given in the memoir of Count de Vergennes read to the king, already quoted, page 311. Opposition to any movement to conquer Canada was likewise made part of the duty of M. Gérard. Yet his successor assured congress that his sovereign *desired* to see Canada and Nova Scotia annexed to the United States. *Dipl. Corr. of the Revolution*, vol. x. p. 366. Is this, too, to be classed among the *mensonges politiques* described by Flassan?

constituted the whole of the secondary questions involved in the negotiation. The vital one, of the recognition of independence, was the only thing in which the policy of the two nations exactly coincided. That, under this concurrence of circumstances, the American commissioners were entirely right in maintaining their freedom of action; that, in doing so, they redeemed the dignity of their country in the eyes of all Europe, then inclining to speculate upon its future influence as a make-weight in the scale of France, would seem to be scarcely susceptible of a doubt. Still less can it be questioned that they did wisely in thus acting, if merely considered as a question of policy. For they at once withdrew the interests of their country from the common stock of equivalents, liable to be used like counters to equalize the bargains of the general negotiation. And by saving the pride of the British government, they induced them to offer far easier terms of reconciliation than would have been obtained, had they been passed under the patronage of their most formidable enemy.

The precise character of the policy of the French cabinet in the American Revolution was viewed very differently by different persons at the time, and has of late been once more opened to extended discussion. All the evidence necessary fully to determine it has not yet been submitted to the public eye. But enough has been disclosed to form grounds for a tolerably clear judgment. The memoirs of De Vergennes and Turgot, first sketching out a line of policy for France, and looking at the contest exclusively in the light of its effect upon the power of Great Britain, the confidential dispatches of the former to his envoy in Spain, the policy marked out for M. Gérard, the first minister to the United States, and the way it was executed, as disclosed by the possessor of the papers of that gentleman, and lastly the course of M. Marbois, the real, though not the ostensible, minister to succeed M. Gérard, all, taken together, display a great uniformity from first to last. The intercepted dispatch of Marbois was only an exposition, in terms not guarded against the possibility of exposure, of the same spirit which had animated the policy of M. Gérard. It viewed parties and men in America in exactly the same light in which Gérard had taught his court to see them. It echoed the language of De Rayneval, the brother of M. Gérard, and the man proclaimed by De Ver-

gennes himself[1] as of all men the most thoroughly possessed of his principles of action, and the most relied on in executing them. It is by no means to be regarded as an accidental and volunteer effusion of an eccentric individual. Such an idea is not to be reconciled either with the earlier or the subsequent career of Marbois. Brought up in the schools of diplomacy, he had served Count de Vergennes with skill and success in various posts at the smaller German courts. From Bavaria, where he had been of great service in a critical moment, he had been transferred to the United States to act an equally responsible part. A man passing through such a training, and acting under a prescribed form of instructions, would scarcely be likely to address to his principal any views based on important principles not in accordance with the general line of policy that had been marked out for him. And if he were, he would not put himself by it in a way to be kept much longer employed. Yet it has been alleged that in this letter Marbois had no countenance from the Count de Vergennes, and the language of the latter, excusing it, is quoted in corroboration of this idea. But it is rather a significant proof to the contrary, that the Count not only did not disavow it, but in no way withdrew his favor on account of it. He only said that "the opinion of M. Marbois was not *necessarily* that of the king," a fact which nobody would be wild enough to deny, and further, "that the views indicated in that dispatch had not been followed," a result which might well have been owing to other causes than a disposition to find fault with him for holding them.[2]

Nor yet does the case rest upon the single intercepted dispatch. For Mr. Livingston, whilst foreign secretary, and himself ever disposed to the most favorable construction of the French policy, admits that the views indicated in that dispatch, were in perfect agreement with all of the writer's public language and action whilst he was in Philadelphia. On the other hand, Mr. Adams affirms that they were by no means the views which Marbois, in private conversations during the passage to America, which they took together in the frigate Sensible, had

[1] Flassan, t. vii. p. 365. The language is so emphatic that it puts to rest all doubts of De Rayneval's expressing the opinions of the French court.

[2] Some comments of Mr. Adams on this letter of Marbois, taken from his letters to the Boston Patriot, may be found in the Appendix, D.

developed to him. To suppose, then, that he would change those views after he got to America, and when placed in a higher post of responsibility, with the knowledge that the change must put him either in opposition to, or at variance with the opinions prevailing at Versailles, is utterly contrary to all the principles which have ever been understood to regulate the diplomatic movements of modern European courts. That the views indicated were not actually followed, was owing far more to the turn given by the commissioners of America to the negotiations than to any other cause. For there can be no doubt that if the British had persisted in demanding a greater sacrifice of American interests, in a negotiation carried on with the privity of France, and a peace had depended upon the decision, the advice of Count de Vergennes would have been on the side of sacrifice.

Yet this minister's policy, though by no means deserving of the praise which some Americans, in the enthusiasm of their gratitude to the people of France, a very different body from the cabinet, have been disposed to extend to it; though designed neither to uphold great general ideas, nor to befriend the struggling Americans for their sakes alone, may, when tried by the ordinary standard of European diplomacy, merit to be considered both liberal and comprehensive. Liberal, in its freedom from minor considerations of selfish advantages to be wrung from the necessities of America; comprehensive, in its aim to restore the power of France, so seriously impaired by the disasters and calamities of the preceding war. The incidental consequences, which befell that country from this triumph, in the accumulation of a crushing debt, and in the introduction of a new and potent form of opinion, were not to be foreseen. Count de Vergennes lived long enough to become profoundly alarmed by the progress that the new nation, which he had helped into being, was making.[1] Neither the internal dissensions, nor the external vices, upon the detrimental effects of which he had relied at the outset, proved sufficient to keep down the

[1] Marbois, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, p. 163. Marbois is not an unfriendly witness. On the other hand, there is much stronger testimony to the same effect from the revolutionary party, which, after an examination of the papers, denounced the policy of De Vergennes as having been nothing better than "*une vile spéculation.*" See the report of the minister of foreign affairs to the Convention, in the Appendix, E.

energies set in motion by the new principle of liberty. The instructions of his successor, Count de Montmorin, to his agents, were to avoid giving more strength to America. On Montmorin he devolved the penalty for his own temporary triumph. He was safe in his grave when the avalanche came down upon his disciple inflicting such a dreadful death. With him departed the brilliant era of Louis the Sixteenth's reign. He is the only minister of that nation, during his time, whose career was untinged with a shade of misfortune. His name will always stand, if not among the list of the great in genius or in learning, at least with those of the most wary and skilful steersmen through the difficult navigation of European diplomacy. Considered in the more restricted attitude of a *French* statesman, he is entitled to peculiar praise. Neither does his American policy deserve to be denominated, as it often is by his countrymen, a great mistake. The severance of Great Britain was indispensable to the maintenance of France as a power of the first class in the present century. He foresaw the danger from an empire which would have controlled all the oceans of the globe, and had the ready energy to seize the happy moment for dividing it forever. And his decision set forward the change which has since been and is yet, slowly but certainly, passing over the face of the world.

But if the statesmanship of De Vergennes merits a share of commendation, it is to be awarded to one trained by a discipline of more than half a century to unweave all the tangled threads of the foreign relations of France, the central nation of Europe. Not so with the American commissioners. To them diplomacy, as a science, was, up to the date when they were called to act as representatives of a new power among the nations, utterly unknown. Yet, although destined to meet many of the ablest men then flourishing in Europe, no one can follow the course of their proceedings without receiving a vivid impression of the great and varied abilities displayed by them in every situation in which they were placed. Notwithstanding the differences of sentiment, having their sources deep down in the peculiarities of their minds and hearts, they appear to have put them all out of sight in every case involving the interests of their common country. Of the purity of their patriotism there cannot be a shadow of a doubt. If each of them found a

different field for its exercise, it was only the better to sustain the conclusion to which he arrived with the strength of all. The unity of action thus obtained, did not fail of its effect upon the British agents who were successively sent out to deal with them. Upon every point, on which there was a probability of dispute, they were prepared to reason far more vigorously than those whom they were deputed to meet. And in no case did they manifest more of tact and talent than in that for which they have been sometimes subject to censure. They succeeded in maintaining their own independence without furnishing the least opening for complaint of want of good faith to their ally. Even of Mr. Adams, little as he had cause to be satisfied with the treatment he had previously met with from Count de Vergennes, it was remarked by Mr. Vaughan, in a letter to Lord Shelburne, that nothing could be expected from him, friendly to Great Britain, which was to be obtained at the expense of the alliance with France. As he afterwards significantly remarked, in reply to the rather indiscreet outgiving of George the Third, he had no attachment but to his own country. This was the ruling principle of his foreign policy, not merely during this period, but throughout his life; and it was maintained under still more severe trials, the nature of which will be explained as this narrative proceeds.

When the accounts of the signature of the preliminaries arrived in the United States, they were received both in and out of congress with general joy, not unmingled with apprehensions. The terms obtained by the United States were so satisfactory as to preclude all possibility of complaint on this score. But there were some who disapproved of the violation of the instructions as a breach of good faith towards France, and others who, as yet unapprised of all the circumstances attending the negotiation, were fearful lest their ministers had fallen upon some trap, which might yet be sprung by Great Britain, and destroy at once the alliance with France and the pacification. The greatest embarrassment seems to have arisen from the separate and secret article, establishing a boundary on the south, more or less remote, according to the hands into which the ownership of the Floridas might fall. This article was one, in which France could claim no interest excepting as the ally of Spain, and of which she could scarcely make a complaint even in

that relation, as no rights of Spain in the tract of land conditionally ceded were to be affected. From the abstract of the debates, to which this matter gave rise, and in which congress divided much in the usual way, it would appear as if the anxiety to avert possible consequences from what might be stigmatized as rashness in their ministers, was the leading motive in their policy. Mr. Livingston, with characteristic caution, addressed a letter to the president of congress, dwelling upon the danger of this secret article as an instrument in the hands of Great Britain, and suggesting the adoption of an order instructing him to avert the apprehended evils, by communicating the article at once to the French minister, by directing the ministers to agree to the least favorable line of boundary, without any contingency as to the ownership of the adjacent territory, and by disclaiming any validity of the preliminaries unless in conjunction with a treaty between Great Britain and France. The timidity of this proceeding, in surrendering a considerable tract to Spain without any consideration whatever, as well as in volunteering a disavowal of a construction to which the negotiators themselves had never dreamed of giving countenance, is its most striking feature. Mr. Madison, among others, showed clearly enough, in the debate, that the alarm at the secret article, as a violation even of the well-known restrictions on the American commissioners, was without just foundation. As Mr. Livingston's proposal did not meet with much favor in congress, three others were successively offered by different members, Mr. Williamson, Mr. Peters, and Mr. Alexander Hamilton, neither of which seemed exactly to meet the views of a majority. On the other hand, Mr. John Rutledge, of South Carolina, declared himself with so much warmth and earnestness against any action of the kind at all, and the New England members manifested so general a determination to sustain him, that the subject was not then further pressed. The arrival of later intelligence dispelled uneasiness as to possible consequences, so that the question lost its interest, and was forgotten in the general congratulations upon the glorious issue of the contest.

Mr. Livingston, however, anxious not to be wanting in courtesy to France by utterly neglecting the remonstrances which had at last arrived from that country, and sincere in his own belief of their soundness, seized the opportunity of the first dis-

patch to the commissioners to give his sentiments at large, and to express his dissent from the reasoning upon which they rested their separate action. This paper was received by a majority of them with not a little indignation. The task of framing a reply was devolved upon Mr. Jay, who accordingly prepared a draft, the substance of which was finally adopted and signed by them all. But a portion of the commencement, objected to by Dr. Franklin as unnecessary in the existing state of things, was stricken out. Mr. Jay, unwilling to lose it altogether, embodied it as an expression of his own sentiments in a private letter to Mr. Livingston, which has been since given to the world in the biography written by his son. Another form, proposed by Mr. Laurens as a substitute for that of Mr. Jay, met with no better success, and was also laid aside. But as these suppressed passages were deemed of sufficient consequence to be recorded in the book kept by the secretary of the commission, together with the reason given for not adopting them, it may subserve the purpose of completing the evidence of all the movements in this most important negotiation, to give them to the world. For this reason they are placed in the Appendix to the present volume.[1]

The general pacification was effected by the signature of the preliminaries between the three great powers on the 21st of January, 1783. But Great Britain, which had demanded at the hands of Lord Shelburne some sort of a peace, was by no means disposed to receive any sort with favor, much less to approve that which he was compelled to present. Of the factions into which parliament was then divided, not one but acknowledged the necessity under which he had acted, yet not one was averse to making it a cause of reproach to him that he had done so. History does not furnish an instance of a more gross perversion of public professions to private ends than this. The remnant of the Rockingham Whigs, which had continued in the cabinet at the time of Mr. Fox's resignation, now deserted Shelburne, so that, when the time came to meet parliament, he was left almost without support. It is difficult to find in the public policy of that minister any justification for the course adopted towards him by all sides. The

[1] See Appendix, F.

only objection of a serious nature urged against him was a personal one, of duplicity in his relations with his colleagues. But although his isolated habits gave some color to the accusation, the instance most relied on by Mr. Fox to establish it, is now clearly proved to have been greatly misconceived. He certainly was not to blame, in saying nothing of the proposal made to him to cede Canada by Dr. Franklin; a proposal which he never manifested any inclination seriously to entertain. Yet the experiment served to show the impossibility of keeping a cabinet together upon his plan of imperfect confidence in its head on the part of its members. Lord Shelburne was quite as jealous of the influence of Fox, as Fox was suspicious of him. Yet he brought himself at last to offer to Fox, through the agency of the younger Pitt, a free opening to power. The refusal to accept this proposal on any terms short of the removal of the chief, was the selfish act which determined the character of the rest of Fox's political life. Fearful of a union, in which there would have been a general harmony of principles, as likely to shut them out for a long time from place, the faction of Lord North, on their side, made overtures to their bitterest opponents, the Rockingham Whigs, which they, forgetful of their own self-respect, and listening only to the promptings of their favorite leader, were tempted, in an evil hour, to accept. Thus originated the ill-starred coalition, in which Fox began by condemning a treaty, the legitimate consequence of his own policy whilst a member of the ministry, the mere hesitation to accept which in its fullest extent by Shelburne had been his pretext for deserting it; and in which he ended by approving, when he got to be a minister, the very same articles, in the shape of a definitive treaty, against which he made his victorious assault when offered in the form of preliminaries by Shelburne. The extent to which a contemporary age can be biased in its judgments by the authority of a man of leading character in the political arena, it is almost impossible to measure by any standard of abstract morality. There is no more striking instance of it in English history, than that of Mr. Fox. But posterity cannot be so far blinded by such influences as to leave uncondemned those great delinquencies of his life, both public and private, which forfeit for him the honor of being set down as a benefactor of his own generation, or an example for imitation by those that are to come.

CHAPTER VIII.

Illness in Europe — Commercial Treaties — Mission to the Court of Great Britain.

Immediately after the signature of the preliminary articles, in the manner already mentioned, Mr. Adams, in a dispatch to Mr. Livingston, transmitting them, announced his desire to resign all his employments. The principal objects for which he had consented to come to Europe at all, having been accomplished, and the definitive treaty being likely to be completed before a reply could return, he felt warranted in asking to be released from further service. Congress, however, was in no humor to comply with the request. Satisfied with the action of the commissioners in procuring the peace, they were now desirous to enlist them in the work of superadding a treaty of commerce with Great Britain. This idea had taken its rise in a suggestion made by Mr. Adams himself in a later dispatch, which lamented the revocation of the commission formerly given to him, and urged a reëstablishment of it at this auspicious moment, in the hands of one or more of the official representatives of the country, who might be left in Europe. Congress adopted it by giving the necessary powers to Messrs. Adams, Franklin, and Jay. And the receipt of this intelligence determined Mr. Adams to remain, after the signature of the definitive treaty.

But the labors, anxieties, and excitement of the trials through which he had passed, had acted strongly upon his physical frame, already weakened by one violent fever taken during his residence in Holland, two years before. Scarcely were the necessary dispatches, transmitting the history of the treaty of peace, fairly in the hands of Mr. Thaxter, his secretary, who was about to return home, when he was brought down again, in Paris, with a severe illness. Inasmuch as he has himself given

a familiar, careless narrative of his adventures during the few months that ensued, which makes the last of the reminiscences supplied by him for the columns of the Boston Patriot, and in which one or two curious anecdotes are related, it may afford a refreshing transition to insert whatever portions of it appear to be of any interest.

"Whether the violence of exercise in riding more than a hundred miles a day, for so many days together, on my journey to Holland, in a sultry season, or whether the deleterious steams of marshes and canals in that country, so pestilential to foreigners, had filled me with the seeds of disease, I found myself, on my return to Paris, very unwell, and continued in a feeble, drooping condition till Mr. Thaxter's departure. My disorder was, in part, occasioned, perhaps, or at least aggravated, by the sedentary and inactive life to which I was obliged to submit after my return from Holland. Travellers ought never to forget that, after a course of long journeys and uncommon exercise, their transition to a sedentary life and total inactivity ought not to be sudden. My duty demanded it of me, as I thought; for every moment of time that could be spared from meals and sleep was required of me and two clerks, Mr. Thaxter and Mr. Charles Storer, to copy my own papers, and those of Mr. Jay, who had no clerk or secretary.

"Mr. Thaxter was gone, and I soon fell down in a fever, not much less violent than that I had suffered two years before at Amsterdam. Sir James Jay, who had been some time in Paris, and had often visited at my house, became my physician, and I desired no better. The grand *Hôtel du Roi*, *Place du Carousel*, where I had apartments, was situated at the confluence of so many streets, that it was a kind of thoroughfare. A constant stream of carriages was rolling by it over the pavements for one and twenty hours out of the twenty-four. From two o'clock to five in the morning there was something like stillness and silence, but all the other one and twenty hours was a constant roar, like incessant rolls of thunder. When I was in my best health, I sometimes thought it would kill me; but now, reduced to extreme weakness, and burning with a violent fever, sleep was impossible. In this forlorn condition, Mr. Thaxter, who had been to me a nurse, a physician, and a comforter at Amsterdam, was separated from me forever. My American

servant, Joseph Stevens, who had been useful to me in Amsterdam, had fallen in love with a pretty English girl, (how she came there, I know not,) and married her. Consequently he left my service, and soon after embarked for America, and perished at sea; at least he has never been heard of since. With none but French servants about me, of whom, however, I cannot complain, for their kindness, attention, and tenderness surprised me, I was in a deplorable condition, hopeless of life in that situation. In this critical and desperate moment, my friends all despairing of my recovery in that thoroughfare, Mr. Barclay offered me apartments in his *hôtel* at Auteuil, and Sir James Jay thought I might be removed, and advised it. With much difficulty it was accomplished. On the 22d of September I was removed, and the silence of Auteuil, exchanged for the roar of the *Carousel*, the pure air of a country garden, in place of the tainted atmosphere of Paris, procured me some sleep, and, with the skill of my physician, gradually dissipated the fever, though it left me extremely emaciated and weak.

"As I have never found, in the whole course of my life, any effectual resource for the preservation of health when enjoyed, or the recovery of it when lost, but exercise and simplicity of diet, as soon as I had strength, by the assistance of two servants to get into my carriage, I rode twice a day in the *Bois de Boulogne*. When my strength was sufficiently increased, I borrowed Mr. Jay's horse, *i. e.* my colleague's horse, and generally rode twice a day, until I had made myself master of that curious forest. . . . . .

"Lost health is not easily recovered. Neither medicine, nor diet, nor any thing would ever succeed with me, without exercise in open air. And although riding in a carriage has been found of some use, and on horseback still more, yet none of these have been found effectual with me in the last resort, but walking; walking four or five miles a day, sometimes for years together, with a patience, resolution, and perseverance, at the price of which many persons would think, and I have been sometimes inclined to think, life itself was scarcely worth purchasing. Not all the skill and kind assiduity of my physician, nor all the scrupulous care of my regimen, nor all my exercise in carriage and on the saddle, was found effectual for the restoration of my health. Still remaining feeble, emaciated, and lan-

guid to a great degree, my physician and all my friends advised me to go to England, and to Bath, to drink the waters and to bathe in them. The English gentlemen politely invited me, with apparent kindness, to undertake the journey.

"But before I set out, I ought not to forget my physician. Gratitude demands that I should remember his benevolence. His attendance had been voluntarily assiduous, punctual, and uniformly kind and obliging; and his success had been equal to his skill in breaking the force of the distemper, and giving me a chance of a complete recovery in time. I endeavored to put twenty guineas into his hand, but he positively refused to accept them. He said the pleasure of assisting a friend and countryman in distress, in a foreign country, was reward enough for him, and he would have no other. I employed all the arguments and persuasions with him in my power, at least to receive the purchase of his medicines. He said he had used no medicines but such as he had found in my house among my little stores, and peremptorily and finally refused to receive a farthing for any thing.

"As my health, though still very feeble, was now thought sufficient to bear the journey, on Monday, the 20th of October, 1783, I set out, with my son and one servant, on a journey to London. . . . . .

"The post-boy (who, upon asking where I would be carried, was answered 'to the best inn in London, for all are alike unknown to me,') carried us to the Adelphi buildings in the Strand. Whether it was the boy's cunning, or whether it was mere chance, I know not, but I found myself in a street which was marked John's Street. The postilion turned a corner, and I was in Adam's Street. He turned another corner, and I was in John Adam's Street! I thought, surely we are arrived in Fairy land. How can all this be?

"Arrived at Osborne's Adelphi Hotel, and having engaged convenient apartments, which was all I desired, and as much as my revenues could command, I inquired of Mr. Osborne, our landlord, about the oddity of meeting my own name in all the streets about his house. I was informed that the Adelphi Hotel and all the streets and buildings about it had been planned and executed by two architects by the name of Adams, two brothers from Scotland, the name of the oldest of whom was John, both

under the protection and probably the support of the great Earl of Mansfield; that the hotel and many other of the buildings were elevated to a height in the air, so that the rooms for stables, stores and cellars, apparently under ground, were more spacious and capacious than all the buildings above ground; and that the elder brother, John Adams, had been permitted by Lord Mansfield to give his own name to all the streets he had erected, and the name of the Adelphi, the brothers, to the hotel.[1]

"I was not long at the Adelphi, but soon removed to private lodgings, which, by the way, were ten times more public, and took apartments at Mr. Stockdale's, in Piccadilly, where Mr. Laurens had lately lodged before me. Here I had a great opportunity of learning (for Dr. Brett was at the next door) the state of the current literature of London. I will not enlarge upon this subject at present, if ever. I found it exactly similar to what I had seen in Paris. The newspapers, the magazines, the reviews, the daily pamphlets were all in the hands of hirelings, men of no character. I will sum up all upon this subject in the words of one of the most active and extensive among the printers and booksellers to me. 'Sir,' said he, 'the men of learning are all stark mad. There are in this city at least one hundred men of the best education, the best classical students, the most accomplished writers, any one of whom I can hire for one guinea a day to go into my closet and write for me whatever I please, for or against any man or any cause. It is indifferent to them whether they write *pro* or *con*.' These were the men, both in Paris and London, who preached about the progress of reason, the improvements of society, the liberty, equality, fraternity, and the rights of man. They made their experiment in France, and came very near it in England, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Geneva, and, indeed, in all the rest of Europe. It is no wonder that so many of them concurred with Tacitus and Quintilian, in avowing their doubts whether the world was governed by blind chance or eternal fate. If they had not discarded a much better and more divine philosophy, they would never have reduced the world to this anarchy and chaos.

[1] There were four brothers instead of two; a street was named for each of them. The surname was Adam.

"Curiosity prompted me to trot about London as fast as good horses, in a decent carriage, could carry me. I was introduced, by Mr. Hartley, on a merely ceremonious visit, to the Duke of Portland, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Fox; but finding nothing but ceremony there, I did not ask favors or receive any thing but cold formalities from ministers of state or ambassadors. I found that our American painters had more influence at court to procure all the favors I wanted, than all of them. Mr. West asked of their Majesties permission to show me and Mr. Jay the originals of the great productions of his pencil, such as Wolf, Bayard, Epaminondas, Regulus, &c., which were all displayed in the queen's palace, called Buckingham House. The gracious answer of the king and queen was, that he might show us "the whole house." Accordingly, in the absence of the royal family at Windsor, we had an opportunity, at leisure, to see all the apartments, even to the queen's bedchamber, with all its furniture, to her Majesty's German bible, which attracted my attention as much as any thing else. The king's library struck me with admiration. I wished for a week's time, but had but a few hours. The books were in perfect order, elegant in their editions, paper, binding, &c., but gaudy and extravagant in nothing. They were chosen with perfect taste and judgment; every book that a king ought to have always at hand, and so far as I could examine and could be supposed capable of judging, none other. Maps, charts, &c., of all his dominions in the four quarters of the world, and models of every fortress in his empire.

"In every apartment of the whole house, the same taste, the same judgment, the same elegance, the same simplicity, without the smallest affectation, ostentation, profusion, or meanness. I could not but compare it, in my own mind, with Versailles, and not at all to the advantage of the latter. I could not help comparing it with many of the gentlemen's seats which I had seen in France, England, and even Holland. The interior of this palace was perfect. The exterior, both in extent, cost, and appearance, was far inferior not only to Versailles and the seats of the princes in France, but to the country houses of many of the nobility and gentry of Great Britain. The truth is, a minister can at any time obtain from parliament a hundred millions to support any war, just or unjust, in which he chooses to

involve the nation, much more easily than he can procure one million for the decent accommodation of the court. We gazed at the great original paintings of our immortal countryman, West, with more delight than on the very celebrated pieces of Vandyke and Rubens, and with admiration not less than that inspired by the cartoons of Raphael.

"Mr. Copley, another of my countrymen, with whom I had been much longer acquainted, and who had obtained, without so much royal protection, a reputation not less glorious, and that by studies and labors not less masterly in his art, procured me, and that from the great Lord Mansfield, a place in the House of Lords, to hear the king's speech at the opening of parliament, and to witness the introduction of the Prince of Wales, then arrived at the age of twenty-one. One circumstance, a striking example of the vicissitudes of life and the whimsical antitheses of politics, is too precious for its moral to be forgotten. Standing in the lobby of the House of Lords, surrounded by a hundred of the first people of the kingdom, Sir Francis Molineux, the gentleman usher of the black rod, appeared suddenly in the room with his long staff, and roared out, with a very loud voice: 'Where is Mr. Adams, Lord Mansfield's friend?' I frankly avowed myself Lord Mansfield's friend, and was politely conducted, by Sir Francis, to my place. A gentleman said to me the next day: 'How short a time has passed since I heard that same Lord Mansfield say, in that same House of Lords, My Lords, if you do not kill him, he will kill you.'[1] Mr. West said to me that this was one of the finest finishings in the picture of American Independence.

"Pope had given me, when a boy, an affection for Murray. When in the study and practice of the law, my admiration of the learning, talents, and eloquence of Mansfield had been constantly increasing, though some of his opinions I could not approve. His politics in American affairs I had always detested. But now I found more politeness and good-humor in him than in Richmond, Camden, Burke, or Fox.

"If my business had been travels, I might write a book. But I must be as brief as possible.

1 This remark, applied to the Americans generally, was made at the beginning of the struggle, 20 December, 1775. Lord Campbell's *Life of Mansfield*, *in Lives of the Chief Justices of England*, vol. ii. p. 499.

"I visited Sir Ashton Lever's museum, where was a wonderful collection of natural and artificial curiosities from all parts and quarters of the globe. Here I saw again that collection of American birds, insects, and other rarities, which I had so often seen before at Norwalk, in Connecticut, collected and preserved by Mr. Arnold, and sold by him to Governor Tryon for Sir Ashton. Here, also, I saw Sir Ashton and some other knights, his friends, practising the ancient, but, as I thought, long forgotten art of archery. In his garden, with their bows and arrows, they hit as small a mark and at as great a distance as any of our sharp-shooters could have done with their rifles.

"I visited, also, Mr. Wedgwood's manufactory, and was not less delighted with the elegance of his substitute for porcelain, than with his rich collection of utensils and furniture from the ruins of Herculaneum, bearing incontestable evidence, in their forms and figures, of the taste of the Greeks; a nation that seems to have existed for the purpose of teaching the arts, and furnishing models to all mankind of grace and beauty in the mechanic arts, no less than in statuary, architecture, history, oratory, and poetry.

"The manufactory of cut glass, to which some gentlemen introduced me, did as much honor to the English as the mirrors, the Sèvres china, or the Gobelin tapestry of France. It seemed to be the art of transmuting glass into diamonds.

"Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the Exchange, and other public buildings did not escape my attention. I made an excursion to Richmond Hill to visit Governor Pownall and Mr. Penn, but had not time to visit Twickenham. The grotto and the quincunx, the rendezvous of Swift, Bolingbroke, Arbuthnot, Gay, Prior, and even the surly Johnson and the haughty Warburton, will never be seen by me, though I ardently desired it.

"I went to Windsor, and saw the castle and its apartments, and enjoyed its vast prospect. I was anxiously shown the boasted chambers where Count Tallard, the captive of the Duke of Marlborough, had been confined. I visited the terrace and the environs; and, what is of more importance, I visited the Eaton school. And if I had been prudent enough to negotiate with my friend West, I doubt not I might have obtained permission to see the queen's lodge. But as the solicitation of these little favors requires a great deal of delicacy and many

prudent precautions, I did not think it proper to ask the favor of anybody. I must confess that all the pomps and pride of Windsor did not occupy my thoughts so much as the forest, and comparing it with what I remembered of Pope's Windsor Forest.

"My health was very little improved by the exercise I had taken in and about London; nor did the entertainments and delights assist me much more. The change of air and of diet, from which I had entertained some hopes, had produced little effect. I continued feeble, low, and drooping. The waters of Bath were still represented to me as an almost certain resource. I shall take no notice of men or things on the road. I had not been twenty minutes at the hotel in Bath before my ancient friend and relation, Mr. John Boylston, called upon me, and dined with me. After dinner he was polite enough to walk with me about the town, showed me the Crescent, the public buildings, the card rooms, the assembly rooms, the dancing rooms, &c., objects about which I had little more curiosity than about the bricks and pavements. The baths, and the accommodations for using the waters, were reserved for another day. But before that day arrived, I received dispatches from America, from London, and from Amsterdam, informing me that the drafts of congress, by Mr. Morris, for money to be transmitted in silver through the house of Le Couteulx, at Paris, and through the Havana, to Philadelphia, together with the bills drawn in favor of individuals in France, England, and Holland, had exhausted all my loan of the last summer, which had cost me so much fatigue and ill health; that an immense flock of new bills had arrived, drawn in favor of Sir George Baring, or Sir Francis Baring, I forget which, of London, and many other persons; that these bills had been already presented, and protested for non-acceptance; and that they must be protested, in their time, for non-payment, unless I returned immediately to Amsterdam, and could be fortunate enough to obtain a new loan, of which my bankers gave me very faint hopes.

"It was winter. My health was very delicate. A journey and voyage to Holland at that season would very probably put an end to my labors. I scarcely saw a possibility of surviving it. Nevertheless, no man knows what he can bear till he tries. A few moments reflection determined me; for although I had

little hope of getting the money, having experienced so many difficulties before, yet making the attempt and doing all in my power would discharge my own conscience, and ought to satisfy my responsibility to the public. I returned to London, and from thence repaired to Harwich. Here we found the packet detained by contrary winds and a violent storm. Detained in a very uncomfortable inn, ill accommodated and worse provided, I and my son, without society and without books, wore away three days of *ennui*, not a little chagrined with the unexpected interruption of our visit to England, and the disappointment of our journey to Bath; and not less anxious on account of our gloomy prospects for the future.

"On the fourth day, the wind having veered a little, we were summoned on board the packet. With great difficulty she turned the point and gained the open sea. In this channel, on both sides the island of Great Britain, there is, in bad weather, a tremulous, undulating, turbulent kind of irregular tumbling sea that disposes men more to the *mal de mer* than even the surges of the Gulf Stream, which are more majestic. The passengers were all at extremities for almost the whole of the three days that we were struggling with stormy weather and beating against contrary winds. The captain and his men, worn out with fatigue and want of sleep, despaired of reaching Helvoet Sluys, and determined to land us in the island of Goree. We found ourselves, upon landing, on a desolate shore, we knew not where. A fisherman's hut was all the building we could see. There we were told it was five or six miles from the town of Goree. The man was not certain of the distance, but it was not less than four miles, nor more than six. No kind of conveyance could be had. In my weak state of health, rendered more impotent by bad nourishment, want of sleep, and wasting sickness on board the packet, I thought it almost impossible that in that severe weather I could walk through ice and snow four miles before I could find rest. As has been said before, human nature never knows what it can endure before it tries the experiment. My young companion was in fine spirits; his gayety, activity, and attention to me increased as difficulties multiplied, and I was determined not to despair. I walked on with caution and moderation, and survived much better than could have been expected, till we reached the town of Goree.

When we had rested and refreshed ourselves at the inn, we made inquiries concerning our future route. It was pointed out to us, and we found we must cross over the whole island of Goree, then cross the arm of the sea to the island of Over Flackee, and run the whole length of that island to the point from whence the boats pass a very wide arm of the sea, to the continent, five or six miles from Helvoet Sluys.

"But we were told that the rivers and arms of the sea were all frozen over, so that we could not pass them but upon the ice, or in ice boats. Inquiring for a carriage of some kind or other, we were told that the place afforded none better, and, indeed, none other than boor's wagons. That this word *boor* may not give offence to any one, it is necessary to say that it signifies no more in Dutch than peasant in France, or countryman, husbandman, or farmer in America. Finding no easier vehicle, we ordered a wagon, horses, and driver to be engaged for us, and departed on our journey. Our carriage had no springs to support, nor cushions to soften, the seats. On hard benches, in a wagon fixed to the axletree, we were trotted and jolted over the roughest road you can well imagine. The soil upon these islands is a stiff clay, and in rainy weather becomes as soft and miry as mortar. In this state they had been trodden by horses, and cut into deep ruts by wagon wheels, when a sudden change of the weather had frozen them as hard as rocks. Over this bowling green we rolled, or rather hopped and skipped, twelve miles in the island of Goree, and I know not how many more in Over Flackee, till we arrived at the inn at the ferry, where we again put up. Here we were obliged to wait several days, because the boats were all on the other side. The pains of waiting for a passage were much alleviated here by the inexpressible delight of rest, after such violent agitations by sea and land, by good fires, warm rooms, comfortable beds, and wholesome Dutch cheer. And all these were made more agreeable by the society of a young English gentleman, not more than twenty, who, happening to come to the inn, and finding we had the best room and the best fire, came in, and very modestly and respectfully requested to sit with us. We readily consented, and soon found ourselves very happy in his company. He was cheerful, gay, witty, perfectly well bred, and the best acquainted with English literature of any youth of

his age I ever knew. The English classics, English history, and all the English poets were familiar to him. He breakfasted, dined, supped, and, in short, lived with us, and we could not be dull, and never wanted conversation while we stayed. As I never asked his name or his history, I cannot mention either.

"We were obliged to bid high for a passage, and promise them whatever they demanded. Signals were made, and at last an ice-boat appeared. An ice-boat is a large ferry-boat, placed and fastened on runners. We embarked early in the morning. The passage is very wide over this arm of the sea. We were rowed in the water till we came to the ice, when the skipper and his men, to the number of eight or ten, perhaps, leaped out upon the ice, and hauled the boat up after them, when the passengers were required to get out and walk upon the ice, while the boatmen dragged the boat upon her runners. Presently, they would come to a spot where the ice was thin and brittle, when all would give way, and down went the boat into the water. The men were so habituated to this service that they very dexterously laid hold of the sides, and leaped into the boat; then they broke away the thin ice till the boat came to a part thick enough for the passengers to leap in, when the men broke away the thin ice forward, and rowed the boat in the water till she came to a place again strong enough to bear, when all must disembark again, and march men and boat upon the ice. How many times we were obliged to embark and disembark, in the course of the voyage, I know not, but we were all day and till quite night in making the passage. The weather was cold; we were all frequently wet; I was chilled to the heart, and looked, I suppose, as I felt, like a withered old worn-out carcase. Our polite skipper frequently eyed me, and said he pitied the old man. When we got ashore, he said he must come and take the old man by the hand and wish him a safe journey to the Hague. He was sorry to see that I was in such bad health, and suffered so much as he had observed upon the passage. He had done every thing in his power, and so had his men, to make it easy and expeditious; but they could do no better. This I knew to be true. We parted very good friends, well satisfied with each other. I had given them what they very well loved, and they had done their best for me.

"I am weary of my journey, and shall hasten to its close.

No carriage was to be had, and no person was to be seen. But, by accident, a boor came along with an empty wagon. We offered him any thing he would ask to take us to the Briel. Arrived there, we obtained a more convenient carriage, but the weather was so severe, and the roads so rough that we had a very uncomfortable journey to the Hague. Here I was at home in the *Hôtel des États Unis*, but could not indulge myself. My duty lay at Amsterdam, among undertakers and brokers, with very faint hopes of success. I was, however, successful beyond my most sanguine expectations, and obtained a loan of millions enough to prevent all the bills of congress from being protested for non-payment, and to preserve our credit in Europe for two or three years longer, after which another desperate draft of bills from congress obliged me once more to go over from England to Holland to borrow money. I succeeded also in that; which preserved our credit till my return to America, in 1788, and till the new government came into operation and found itself rich enough.

"Here ends the very rough and uncouth detail of my voyages, journeys, labors, perils, and sufferings under my commissions for making peace with Great Britain.

"I had ridden on horseback often to congress, over roads and across ferries, of which the present generation have no idea; and once, in 1777, in the dead of winter, from Braintree to Baltimore, five hundred miles, upon a trotting horse, as Dean Swift boasted that he had done, or could do. I had been three days in the Gulf Stream, in 1778, in a furious hurricane and a storm of thunder and lightning, which struck down our men upon deck, and cracked our mainmast; when the oldest officers and stoutest seamen stood aghast, at their last prayers, dreading every moment that a butt would start, and all perish. I had crossed the Atlantic, in 1779, in a leaky ship, with perhaps four hundred men on board, who were scarcely able, with two large pumps going all the twenty-four hours, to keep water from filling the hold, in hourly danger, for twenty days together, of foundering at sea. I had passed the mountains in Spain, in the winter, among ice and snow, partly on mule-back and partly on foot; yet I never suffered so much in any of these situations as in that jaunt from Bath to Amsterdam, in January, 1784. Nor did any of those adventures ever do such lasting injuries to my health. I never got over it till my return home, in 1788."

Among the singular coincidences which occurred in the life of Mr. Adams, down to its very close, that which is alluded to in the preceding reminiscence is deserving to be dwelt upon for a moment. He came to England, for the first time, in no official capacity, but merely as a visitor, for the sake of his health. Here he saw the Duke of Portland, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Burke, in the short-lived enjoyment of office through the coalition, whom he found shy of acknowledging much acquaintance with the triumphant rebels; whilst, on the other hand he, one of the most distinguished of them, was indebted to the interference of a refugee for the privilege of being admitted by the Tory, Lord Mansfield, to witness the confession made to his parliament and people by George the Third himself, that he had made a treaty of peace with the colonies no longer, but now the independent States of North America. How different must have been the feelings of the two persons most deeply interested in the scene; the sovereign, who felt that he had lost the brightest jewel of his crown, and whose instinctive pride, rather than his forecast, taught him that he was marking the epoch of culmination in the fortunes of Britain; and the subject, at first reluctantly drawn in to resistance, but impelled by his sense of injustice, at every personal sacrifice, to undertake a part of the gigantic task of calling a new empire into being, and, once undertaken, to follow it up, in the face of every discouragement, with a soul undaunted by the comminations lanced against him as a traitor, who could securely occupy a place in the heart of Britain's proudest assembly, in the very presence of the monarch, to hear him confess to the world that he had thrown away an empire. And instead of dishonoring the humble name of his American auditor, that name was henceforth to go out indelibly graven by his act upon the list of those who, by upholding fundamental principles at critical moments, originate the beneficial movements of the world!

The reckless and hap-hazard manner in which the financial officers of congress continued to overdraw the accounts of their bankers in Europe, had once more placed the credit of the United States at Amsterdam in the utmost jeopardy. It was the announcement of this fact, made to Mr. Adams by Messrs. Willink and others, the undertakers of the former loan, which had called him from London, to undertake, in the dead of winter, the

journey to Amsterdam described in the preceding extract. On his first arrival he seems to have entertained no hope of being able to raise further means in season to meet the approaching liabilities. The United States had shown few signs of restoration from the exhaustion consequent upon the war, or of energy in reorganizing their finances. Neither did their practice, of drawing at random, recommend itself to the shrewd and careful habits of the Dutch. It is not too much to say that, had the operation been then to begin, scarcely any house would have been found daring enough to undertake it. But in the lucky moment of confidence inspired by the successful issue of the struggle, one loan had been taken up. This created in the creditors a new and strong class of motives to maintain, if possible, the solvency of the debtor State, and in the undertakers to exert themselves to persuade them to come to their aid. As a consequence, propositions for a new loan were started, varying from the old one only in the less advantageous terms obtained by the United States. Under the circumstances, nothing could be expected for a country which had placed itself so rashly at the mercy of its creditors, to save it from mercantile dishonor, better than that it should be made to pay a price for its improvidence. Mr. Adams, finding himself reduced to the painful dilemma of suffering the bills to be protested or of accepting the terms offered, very wisely decided for the latter. For this and all his services of the same kind in Holland, as well before as afterwards, by means of which the United States were carried through the period of social disorganization that intervened between the peace and the establishment of the federal constitution, Mr. Adams received the repeated thanks of Mr. Morris and his successors in the direction of the finances.

Whilst thus engaged in Holland, Frederick the Second, of Prussia, who had not been an inattentive observer of the course of events, directed his minister at the Hague to make overtures to Mr. Adams for the negotiation of a treaty of commerce. This proposal, so complimentary in its nature, was cordially received by him, though he had no powers to treat. With this understanding, and the assent of his colleagues in Europe, the form of the treaty just entered into with Sweden, by the agency of Dr. Franklin, was transmitted for the consideration of the

king as a suitable basis of negotiation. The monarch soon returned it with but one or two material changes, drawn up by his own hand. After passing forward and backward once or twice, the plan was finally agreed upon and transmitted to congress for their approval. That body, however, had already established a new commission, by virtue of which Mr. Adams, Dr. Franklin, and Mr. Jefferson, who was sent out to take the place of Mr. Jay, were empowered to negotiate treaties of commerce with any and all foreign powers who should be disposed to enter into them. And on them the duty was devolved of continuing the Prussian negotiation upon a basis somewhat altered from that agreed upon in Europe.

Thus it was that Mr. Adams found himself engaged in new labors, that might extend his residence abroad for an indefinite time. How he might have welcomed this under other circumstances, is uncertain. Happily he had written out to America directions to Mrs. Adams, in case of any such event, to come out, with his only daughter, and join him, which she accordingly did during the summer of 1784. Her arrival completely altered the face of his affairs. He forgot the ten years of almost constant separation which had taken place, and became reconciled at once to a longer stay abroad. No man depended more than he upon the tranquil enjoyments of home for his happiness. He took the house at Auteuil, to which he had been removed in the preceding year for recovery from his illness, and returned to a state of life placid and serene. The anxieties and responsibilities, which had so long and so severely pressed upon him in his public life, were all removed. His country was free, and his mind was not so absorbed in what remained of his public avocations as to be closed against the impressions to be received from the neighborhood of the most refined, brilliant, and intellectual community in the world. Paris was just then in that stage of transition from the old to the new, which is apt to quicken whatever there may be of sprightly in society, without having yet materially impaired its stability. Literature and philosophy had become the rage even in fashionable circles. And the flippant ridicule of all things, sacred and profane, of which Voltaire had set a fascinating example, had supplied in zest what was subtracted from the dignified proprieties of ancient France. Mr. Adams

saw something of the literary men of the day, of Marmontel, and Raynal, and De Mably, and he became quite intimate with the Abbés Chalut and Arnoux, and Count Sarsfield, men who lived for society, and who were fully able to open to him a view of its springs, ordinarily little obvious to foreigners. Deriving great enjoyment as he unquestionably did from these opportunities, his quick sagacity was not however less active in determining for himself the question, how far the nation he saw before him would be fitted for any other form of government than the one they had. From the opinion then formed he never changed through all the later vicissitudes which made the maintenance of it sometimes of serious import to himself. The lapse of three quarters of a century, during which almost every variety of experiment has been tried without success, has thus far only proved the correctness of his judgment.

The commissioners assembled, for the first time, for the transaction of business, at Paris, on the 30th of August, 1784, and they immediately adopted the requisite measures to apprise the representatives of the different maritime nations residing in Paris, of the nature and extent of their powers. Favorable answers were received from several governments; but Frederick the Second seems to have been the only sovereign who prosecuted the object with earnestness. Besides the continual exchange of official dispatches, touching the details of the proposed treaty, Baron de Thulemeier maintained his friendly private communications with Mr. Adams as the individual through whom the overture had first been made, and through whom he could best obtain the modifications his sovereign had at heart. Much time elapsed before all the trifling points of difference were adjusted, and in the interval Mr. Adams had been transferred to another scene, so that he was unable to meet the wishes of the worthy baron, to have the last act, the signature of the papers, executed on the same spot and by the same persons under whose auspices the first had been commenced. This treaty is sufficiently remarkable to merit to be distinguished from every other yet made. Free trade, freedom of neutrals, respect for individual property of enemies at sea, the abolition of privateering, and the limitation over the power to confiscate contraband of war, were new and bold steps in the progress of international civilization. Much of the honor of

the suggestions designed to alleviate the ferocity of warfare is due to the original mind of Dr. Franklin. But, as Mr. Adams justly remarks, the lesson which they furnish to mankind will derive its greatest force from the fact that they were adopted by the hero of the seven years' war.

It must be conceded that as yet the principles laid down have met with little response from the philanthropic ardor of the world. But in the progress of mankind the vicissitudes of nations play an important part. And Great Britain, which for a time formed the great obstacle to the improvement of the maritime law, has latterly shown a spirit auguring better things. The signature of the treaty was followed by a period, in which, instead of softening the harshness of the ancient rules, it seemed as if all restraints upon the passions of men had lost their force. Slowly does the statesman of any age resist the tendency of his position to fix skepticism in the possibility of any good. The hard realities of mortal conflict repel the gentle monitions of charity and brotherly love, as wild dreams of the enthusiast. And, what is worse, the hand which has grown to wield a giant's strength, directs its power in a very different spirit from that which guided it in the weakness of infancy. Unfortunately the United States, at the time when they executed this treaty, were in a situation in which its provisions, if generally adopted, would have effectually protected their interests from the haughty domination of the sea, assumed by their ancient mistress. Hence their philanthropy was not wholly free from suspicion of incidental benefit to ensue to themselves. Time has altered this. The nation has now attained a great stature. It yet remains to be seen whether, in its mature vigor, it will adhere to a policy which shall protect the weak against it, as it sought to be protected against the strong, and, by voluntarily setting bounds to its ability to do mischief, furnish a real example of disinterestedness and magnanimity, for the benefit of all futurity.

It has been remarked that this time was to Mr. Adams one of the periods of his life of the most unmixed enjoyment. With his wife, his eldest son, John Quincy, then just rising into a youth of the greatest promise, and a daughter in whom anybody would have felt a pride, about him, near the society of a cultivated metropolis, into which his official position gave him free

admission, he had little to do but to enjoy the day as it passed, heedless of the morrow. Some little notion of his way of life may be gathered from the fresh and sprightly letters of Mrs. Adams, addressed, during this time, to her friends and relatives at home, which have been already given to the world. He was not, however, reserved for satiety in this enjoyment. On the 24th of February, 1785, congress, not insensible of the injury committed by the revocation of his former commission, elected him to the post of Envoy to the court of St. James's. The position was interesting and important. Count de Vergennes observed to him, that it was a marking event, to be the first representative of his country to that which had been its sovereign. The Duke of Dorset, then the British ambassador at Paris, remarked to him, that "he would be stared at a great deal." Trifles indicate character. Without going the length of De Retz, in his judgment pronounced upon Cardinal Chigi, it will not be unsafe in this instance to measure the relative stature of those two men by this single specimen. Mr. Adams, on the other hand, saw in the result not simply a post of honor, but likewise a position of heavy responsibility.

In May of this year (1785) he transferred himself and his family to the other side of the channel, prepared to undertake the new duties to which he had been appointed. The first thing to be done was to go through the ceremony of presentation to the sovereign; to stand face to face with the man, whom he had for the first forty years of his life habitually regarded as his master, and who never ceased to regard him, and the rest of his countrymen, as no better than successful rebels against his legitimate authority. In his dispatch to Mr. Jay, then secretary of foreign affairs, Mr. Adams has left a very interesting account of this meeting. That paper is inserted, in its place, in another part of this work, so that its repetition here is needless. It is not difficult to conceive the varying and opposite emotions by which the parties must have been agitated. On the one side was the king, whose life was one resolute effort to maintain his will above all opposition, until his nervous structure sunk under the struggle. Never reconciled to failure, never yielding cheerfully to defeat, never abandoning a conviction, he was now condemned to the bitter mortification of recognizing an insurgent, whom he thought a traitor, as the representative of a

country, the defection of which was, in his eyes, the great calamity of his reign. On the other side was a man with a will quite as stern, with opinions quite as deeply rooted, and an energy of execution far more vigorous, all however subordinated, at the moment, to the sense of a necessity of uniting a suitable deference to the monarch with the dignity becoming the representative of an equal power, so far as neither to offend Great Britain nor to degrade the United States. This delicate task was to be executed, too, in the home of George the Third, where every one around was a courtier sympathizing with his master's mortification, and curious rather than concerned as to the mode in which the rebel might acquit himself. The Duke of Dorset knew his countrymen well when he predicted their stare, but there is a discrimination even in that, which at all courts is apt to depend upon the presumed temper of the ruler.

All this, however, was outside of the conference, no witness to which was admitted, excepting Lord Carmarthen, the official secretary of foreign affairs. The addresses are reported only by Mr. Adams. That made by himself, as he admits, with visible agitation, though concise, appears extremely appropriate. It is conciliatory in spirit, without betraying any sense of inferiority; holding out a hand as to a friend, and not to a patron. George the Third was not quite so successful. He betrayed that he had learned something of Mr. Adams's lack of good will to the French court; and this impression, confirmed by the words of civility to himself as well as the allusion to ancient ties, appears to have raised in his mind an implication which the terms of the address itself did not justify. The difficulty was increased by the few sentences afterwards spoken to Mr. Adams. They made his position very delicate. It was of the utmost consequence to escape the imputation even of acquiescing in any idea derogatory to the impartial attitude of his countrymen as well as to his own, whilst it was equally important to avoid appearing to slight a civility. Mr. Adams extricated himself with great presence of mind. Apparently falling in with the sense of the king's language, he nevertheless added the significant words: "I must avow to your Majesty, I have no attachment but to my own country." They naturally harmonized with the rectitude of George's character as a British

statesman, and therefore brought from his heart the immediate reply: "An honest man will never have any other." In this sense two more accordant minds were not to be found in the broad surface of both hemispheres. The meeting fitly terminated here. Seldom has it happened, with the empty ceremonials of court presentation, that the individualities of the respective actors have signified so much.

But although George the Third had submitted with dignity to the painful necessity of this conference, it was a sacrifice attended with no permanently favorable result either to America or to Mr. Adams. The Revolution and all connected with it was an unpleasant topic to which he never voluntarily turned his attention. The band of king's friends, for which his reign is memorable in the British constitutional history, was sure to reflect the color of his opinions so long as he held the reins. Hence the obvious wisdom of conciliating the young and rising nation on the other side of the Atlantic was forgotten, and the error of supercilious neglect was preferred. Throughout the whole political history of Great Britain this marked fault may be traced in its relations with foreign nations, but it never showed itself in more striking colors than during the first half century after the independence of the United States. The effects of the mistake then committed have been perceptible ever since. Mr. Jefferson, who soon joined Mr. Adams in London, for the purpose of carrying out, in the case of the British government, the powers vested in the commission to negotiate commercial treaties, has left his testimony of the treatment he met with at court. The king turned his back upon the American commissioners, a hint which, of course, was not lost upon the circle of his subjects in attendance. Who can measure the extent of the influence which even so trifling an insult at this moment may have had in modifying the later opinions of the two men who were subjected to it? And in view of their subsequent career in the United States, who can fail to see how much those opinions have done to give to America the impressions respecting Great Britain that have prevailed down to this day? Often has it happened that the caprices of men in the highest stations have produced more serious effects upon the welfare of millions than the most elaborate policy of the wisest statesmen.

In truth, the leading minds in the government of Britain had been much occupied in deciding upon the course proper to adopt towards the new American nation, and on this subject a wide difference appeared among them. It was a critical moment. There was a choice to be made between opposite ideas; one, leading to hearty conciliation and the establishment of relations of true reciprocity; the other, removing further and further the distance between the kindred peoples, and confirming the alienation which warfare had begun. The majority decided; and they preferred the latter. A generous hand extended to the struggling young country, a liberal construction of treaty stipulations, and a frank concession of commercial privileges, might have won back the confidence of America, and have become the means of imposing upon her chains quite as durable, though by no means so galling, as any which Great Britain could ever have desired her to wear. Instead of this, she relapsed into a cold, distrustful, passive state, offering nothing, requiring every thing, waiting for events in order to see how much could be made out of the distresses of America, and indulging a hope that the prize might yet, by some accident or other, be thrown back into her hands. The policy which the three American negotiators of the treaty of peace marked out to Mr. Oswald, had it been followed out, would have kept the United States tributaries to the mother country for a century. That which was adopted by British ministers, under the instigation of discontented refugees who ever proved their most fatal counsellors, nursed the feelings of enmity already engendered, in such a manner as to break out a quarter of a century later into another conflict of arms, and as even now, after forty years of profound peace and much more conciliatory treatment, not to be altogether at rest.

It is no more than common justice, however, to one eminent statesman of that day, to add that this unfortunate decision was made in opposition to his better judgment. William Pitt, whilst acting as the youthful chancellor of the exchequer to Lord Shelburne, and not yet overwhelmed by the embarrassments that crushed him in after life, had shown an inclination to follow alike the impulses of his heart and the dictates of his education. His system, as first declared, was highly liberal, and, could he then have carried it into full execution, would

have placed his name on a level quite as high as his father's ever deserved to stand. Among its marked features, was the introduction of a bill into parliament, which, though it placed the ships of the United States on the footing of all other independent nations, at the same time laid no higher duties upon their products than those levied upon the British themselves. And with yet greater liberality, it threw open to them the commerce with the British colonies in America, thus removing at once a source of irritation which from the failure of this measure remained in activity for half a century. Regarded as a mere question of self-interest, this bill would have been of great advantage to Great Britain, independently of its effect in conciliating the temper of America. Perseverance in the policy it indicated would have anticipated the events of the last ten years, and averted the conflicts, and the waste of blood and treasure on both sides, which have occurred in the interval.

But the liberal ministry of Lord Shelburne survived the proposition scarcely a month, and its coalition successors listened to very different counsels. Lord Sheffield gave expression to the remonstrance of the navigating interest, which predicted its own downfall in the colonial trade as a consequence of such a policy. He borrowed the language of Deane, Galloway, and Oliver, when he painted in vivid colors, not quite harmonizing with the other picture, the ruin and confusion in which the colonists were involved by the state of anarchy consequent upon their independence. And then he ventured to whisper the prediction that, out of this chaos, New England, at least, would, in the end, solicit to come back as a repentant child to the maternal embrace. These arguments finally carried the day. In July of the year 1783, the exclusive system was decreed, first by orders in council, then by temporary acts of parliament. The United States were treated as utter strangers, and carefully shut out from trade with the colonies. Restriction and commercial jealousy were the order of the day. The demonstrations were viewed by all Americans as hostile in spirit, and therefore to be met in the same manner. The failure of all efforts to establish an effective counter-system of restriction went a great way to rouse them to a sense of the necessity of a better form of government. Pride came in aid of principle, stimulating the sluggish and quickening the timid, until the cry for a new confederation became

general. The pamphlet of Lord Sheffield had its effect upon the formation and adoption of the federal constitution in 1788. Thus it often happens with nations that think to make a gain out of the embarrassments and miseries of their neighbors. Indignation at once supplies the vigor to apply a remedy, which, had the matter been left to reason alone, might have been put off a great while or never been resorted to at all. Lord Sheffield's interference must be classed among the secondary misfortunes which befell Great Britain in the disastrous record of the American war; whilst, among the people of America, it deserves to be remembered with satisfaction as a conversion of what was intended to be a poison into a health-producing medicine.

The restrictive policy having been thus determined upon before Mr. Adams's arrival, little prospect was left to him of effecting any beneficial change. His labors during his stay in Great Britain were therefore confined to fruitless solicitations for the execution of several articles of the treaty of peace. The posts which were to be surrendered had been retained, and no provision had been made to compensate for the slaves and property carried away by the military commanders, contrary to agreement. These complaints were certainly founded in justice; but, on the other hand, the British government were not without reasonable grounds of complaint for similar infractions committed by the Americans. So far from facilitating the recovery of British debts, several States had interposed further obstacles by legislation. The exhaustion of the people was great, and their feelings were still bitter. Poverty united with passion to keep up the hatred of refugees and Tories. The claims advanced by English creditors for interest during the whole period of the war, against merchants whose property had been sacrificed in the struggle, were regarded as little better than the demand of Shylock for the whole pound of flesh nearest the heart. Superadded to all this was the effect of the utter relaxation of the bonds of government, rendering a remedy for any existing evil difficult of attainment. No State was responsible for the acts of its neighbor, and each had within its power the means of rendering null the best-intended legislation of the rest. The confederation, hooped together by the bands of a common war, was falling to ruins in peace. In

real truth, America could not, and Great Britain would not, because America did not, execute the treaty. Under such circumstances, effective negotiation was out of the question. Mr. Adams confined himself to the painful duty of remonstrating almost equally with both governments. His correspondence was of more service at home than abroad, for the letters, communicated from time to time by congress to the separate States, for the purpose of stimulating them to perform their duties, served to accelerate the state of public opinion which, in good time, brought effectual relief.

The situation of an envoy from one nation to another is likely to be made imposing as well as agreeable in direct proportion to the impression that prevails in the world of the power and the energy of the government by which he is sent. For a short time after the close of the struggle, the different sovereigns of Europe awaited with curiosity the results that were to follow the successful establishment of American Independence. But as the accounts came, symptomatic of nothing but anarchy and confusion, the inference grew general that the experiment of self-government had failed, and that the new nation would prove of little account in the affairs of the globe. To an indifferent observer looking from the English point of view, Mr. Adams soon ceased to appear as representing any thing but disorder. His people, impoverished by a nine years' struggle for a fancied good, seemed plunged into an abyss of irremediable evil. The causes for this state of things were too far off to be analyzed. It was enough that the attempt to reëstablish the ordinary course of justice had been met with resistance, to convince a European that an aversion to paying debts honestly contracted had much more to do with American notions of liberty than principle. Hence he held up his hands in amazement at the profligacy of a community which refused to execute its recognized contracts, and determined to waste no more sympathy upon a people thus proving itself beneath his contempt. In Great Britain, especially, this spectacle was witnessed with a mixed feeling of disgust and exultation. No disposition existed to palliate faults or to overlook errors. The observation of them served rather as a relief to wounded pride. It was just what might have been expected. The contemptible rebels were served right. They were paying the

penalty of their sedition and treason. Here was the natural end of all the fine professions about the love of liberty. The liberty wanted was of that kind which means license, which abhors the restraints of well-ordered society, which revels in impunity for criminal offences. To communities thus showing their incompetency to take care of themselves, what was the need of paying the smallest regard? And of him who came to London to represent them, what could be the importance? It would not be a great while before they would all be seen on their knees, supplicating to be taken back on any terms, repenting of their past sins, and promising that they would never commit the like again. Then would be the hour of just retribution. And the ways of Great Britain would go forth justified over the earth.

Such being the state of opinion, the situation of Mr. Adams may be easily imagined; a situation which, instead of growing better, became more hopeless of good in every hour of his stay. The monarch, never well reconciled to the triumph of his subjects, became less and less disposed to put restraint on his feelings. He was cold. Of course, his family were cold. Of course, the courtiers followed the example. What is not in vogue with the quality in England, is sure to be slighted by the commons. There was no cordiality anywhere excepting among the dissenters and the very few who leaned to republican doctrines; no better association than this to prove how unfashionable was every thing American. Of civility, cold and formal, such as only the English know how in perfection to make offensive, there was enough. No marked offence; but supercilious indifference. Official representations lay long unheeded. The courtesy of sending out a minister to America was left unregarded. Last of all, the commercial policy, which had been thus far kept in operation by temporary acts, was made permanent by parliament. This was in 1788, a few months after Mr. Adams had solicited permission to return home. His mission had only served to convince him that nothing was to be looked for in Great Britain but ill-will. Neither could he indulge even in the luxury of complaint, for he had it not to say that America had placed herself in a position void of offence.

Yet, apart from the embarrassments occasioned by the mortifying condition of his own country, the period passed by Mr.

Adams in England was not without its agreeable compensations. The presence of his wife and daughter, and the marriage contracted by the latter with Colonel William Stephens Smith, whom, after many years of honorable service in the war, congress had sent out as secretary to the legation in London, afforded him the domestic society without which he never could be happy; and the leisure he enjoyed from pressing public business yielded an opportunity to turn his mind to other useful objects. Nothing affected him more than the accounts of the condition of the United States, threatening, as they seemed to do, the failure of all the bright hopes he had cherished of their career as an independent nation. The difficulties in their way were clearly enough to be traced to one source, the want of energetic government. It seemed therefore of importance that the true principles, at the foundation of a well-ordered system, should be fully explained. In the formation of the draft of a constitution for Massachusetts, in 1779, Mr. Adams had first labored to embody favorite ideas, which his later opportunities to view the practical operation of the British government had only tended more fully to confirm. He now directed his attention to the analysis of the theory upon which it rested, and to the possibility of stripping it of those appendages which foster a great inequality of social condition, so as to adapt it to purely republican habits. The experiment promised to be of use in confirming the popular mind in the United States, now showing tendencies to wild and dangerous errors, and he determined to make it. Inasmuch as later events tended greatly to distort a proper conception of his views, traces of which are thickly scattered in the writings left by some of his contemporaries, it will not be out of place here to give a brief and impartial summary of the principles that appear to constitute his system.

Unlike most speculators on the theory of government, Mr. Adams begins by assuming the imperfection of man's nature, and introducing it at once as an element with which to compose his edifice. He finds the human race impelled by their passions as often as guided by their reason, sometimes led to good actions by scarcely corresponding motives, and sometimes to bad ones rather from inability to resist temptation than from natural propensity to evil. This is the corner-stone of his sys-

tem. And any substitute for it which involves a different idea, such, for example, as that men will certainly do right from their love of it, or that they can only be deterred from evil by the fear of punishment; any substitute that omits to provide in as many ways as possible for the tremendous working of the passions which attends all contests for the possession of power, must, according to him, end in failure. The problem to be solved is, to what extent these adverse influences, not less than the virtues of all the citizens, can be made to subserve the purpose of supporting government instead of shaking it. This cannot be expected to be done by concentrating power in one place, to be acquired by efforts all exerted in one direction; for such a plan would expose the whole edifice to be submerged by every successive wave of opinion. Neither can it be hoped from the setting in opposition of forces nearly equal; for the conflicts that might result would inevitably be so violent as to threaten total ruin. The true course is, to find the means so to decentralize power, so to distribute it in a multiplicity of parts, as to give no undue preponderance in any single one, and yet to maintain the healthy energy of all.

To arrive at practical results, it is necessary, then, to classify powers. The *interests* of men in society are at the foundation of the attachment to property, through the unequal operation of which arises the distinction between the rich and poor. Their *passions* make themselves felt in the ambition of place as well as in the desire for fame. Out of these causes issue the three concentrated forms of social energy; the multitude, who must ever represent poverty and numbers; the rich, who represent education and property; and the chief, who symbolizes the aspirations of the whole. A wise forecast would then provide free play for the legitimate exercise of these several forces, in some shape or other; thus making each subservient to the common support, and yet placing careful limitations and restrictions around them all. Mr. Adams thought this admirably arranged in the constitution of Great Britain, and therefore worthy of imitation. The distribution of power in the three parts, executive, legislative, and judicial, with the introduction into the second of two opposing elements likely to reduce its otherwise dangerous preponderance over the others, seemed to promise security without the risk of feebleness. All this ap-

peared quite as easy of execution under a system deriving its origin from the people, as under one born of feudal tenures. The required changes would only limit the extent of the powers conferred, and multiply the neutralizing forces. The subdivision as well as the balancing of opposite interests to effect the great purpose of preventing a concentration of too much power at any one point, might be carried as far as could be, consistently with the general good. Yet the rule was not to be applied in all cases equally. The executive, for example, was not to be subdivided in such a manner as to injure its energy, nor weakened so far as to impair its capacity of self-protection; whilst into the legislative was to be introduced a recognition of the interests of property so far as it might tend to keep in check the dangerous tendency to appeal exclusively to numerical strength.

Such is, in brief, the theory of Mr. Adams, as drawn from a review of his writings on the subject throughout his life, and illustrated as well by the early sketch which he drew for the use of the southern States as by the more mature model which he presented for the consideration of the Convention of Massachusetts. It fell in with the habits and prepossessions of his countrymen so far as to be made the foundation of most of the constitutions adopted in the several States. But there were great differences between them in the degree of attention paid to the organic principle, and two or three departed from it altogether. Not a few persons were disposed to regard the complicated machinery which it called into action as cumbrous, and its operations as unnecessarily expensive. The simplicity of an absolute monarchy or of a pure democracy will always have its charm with minds not kept awake to its susceptibility of abuse. As between these extremes, the Americans tended much the most towards democracy. One representative body, vested with powers barely sufficient to supply the need of government in every department, became not an uncommon demand. And it had been latterly growing into popular favor from the dissatisfaction prevailing with all existing institutions, upon which the responsibility for every grievance of the body politic was cast, without the smallest regard to the causes that might really have produced them.

But in addition to the various springs of discontent, which

were combining to shake the doctrines of Mr. Adams in America, the state of affairs in Europe, and especially in France, was superinducing a novel disturbing force of extraordinary strength. Staggering under the combined weight of the moral corruptions and the financial complexities of the preceding reign, with religious institutions sapped by the indefatigable assiduity of the most brilliant minds of the kingdom, moved by the popular sympathies with the victory of liberty effected by French aid in America, that great edifice of European society, which it had taken ten centuries to consolidate, was toppling to its fall. This terrific event was, as usual in such cases, giving out its heralding signs. Prominent among them were the discussions touching the origin of government, in which the natural dryness of the topic was relieved to the general sense by fascinating charms of style and seductive pictures for the imagination. The dreamy enthusiasm of Rousseau combined with the epigrammatic wit of Voltaire to prepare a favorable reception for the more stately speculations of Turgot, De Mably, Mirabeau, and Condorcet. Differing in almost every other particular, there was one point in which these writers were found to agree. The iron hands and hearts of Louis the Eleventh and Henry the Fourth, Richelieu, and Mazarin, by rigidly adhering to one policy for two centuries, had succeeded in eradicating every germ of provincial or departmental independence out of France, and in sowing in its place a fixed attachment to centralization.

As a consequence, little favor has since been extended to any theory based upon a complicated subdivision of powers, and still less to any form of federation whatever. The fancy displayed by Montesquieu for the English system, though caught up by a limited number of disciples, has at no time taken root in the popular mind of France. Turgot, one of the clearest thinkers of his nation, seeing no possible benefit in it, took advantage of the publication by Dr. Price of his pamphlet upon the American governments, to address to him a letter, commenting with regret upon what he called the servility of the States in following the precedent set by the mother country. He was not disposed to admit merit in any system that departed from the utmost simplicity. Neither could he recognize a safer guide than that obtained by concentrating all power in one body

directly representing the nation. The specious doctrine thus put forth was taken up and immediately repeated in the eloquent declamations of Mirabeau and the more logical reasoning of Condorcet, as it has of late been reproduced in the poetic prose of Lamartine; all equally symbolic of the ruling idea of France, but all, so far from proving its soundness, that it has condemned their country twice within a century to pay a fearful price for the lesson that the simplicity aimed at can only come, in its perfect form, in the person of an absolute king.

Alarmed, by the indications of opinion in various countries of Europe and in America, for the consequences that might ensue to his native State, then showing the most unequivocal tendencies to disorganization, Mr. Adams thought he might do service if, from his point of view, he should attempt to lay before the world something in the nature of a general defence of the theory so extensively assailed. He fixed upon the passage of Turgot's letter which referred to the American States, as the text upon which to frame his observations. But not content with fortifying the reasons upon which their system rested, it occurred to him that a secondary class of arguments could be obtained from a wide examination and historical review of the operation of all known forms of government, ancient as well as modern. If, in the process, the truth could be made to appear, that many of them had owed their misfortunes and final ruin to the improper distribution of power, it might be of use as a warning against the repetition of similar experiments. The results of his labor were embraced in a work, entitled *A Defence of the Constitutions of the United States of America against the attack of M. Turgot.* It comprehended an analysis of the various free governments of ancient and modern times, with occasional summaries of their history, to illustrate the nature of the evils under which they had suffered and ultimately perished. It was comprised in three volumes, composed, printed, and published during the author's residence in England. The first volume, which was issued before the others, came to the United States just as the Convention to frame a federal constitution was on the point of commencing its labors at Philadelphia. It was immediately put to press in the principal towns, and, owing to the excitement immediately occasioned by

the anxiety for the success of that assembly, it was read by a number of persons far greater than is in ordinary times attracted to such discussions. Happening to fall in with the popular current just then setting with force against the disorders and commotions that had broken into open violence in some of the States and threatened them all, it did much to confirm many minds in the course of thought which ensured the acceptance of the constitution. This was particularly the case in Massachusetts, where the sentiments of the people were by no means settled. There was a wide diversity of opinion among them, one side, frightened by the prospect of anarchy, leaning to the conviction of a necessity of strong government almost like monarchy, whilst the other, relaxed by the license of the period, regarded with aversion any tendency to more effective restraints. The form of constitution agreed upon at Philadelphia, whilst it was hailed with delight by the commercial interests of the seaboard, was by no means equally relished in the agricultural regions, or by those who had been the most active in the early struggles of the Revolution. The consequence was, that the convention summoned to decide upon its merits on the part of Massachusetts, contained many hesitating members. Much depended upon the course taken by John Hancock and Samuel Adams. At this crisis, the voice of John Adams, warning them of the risk attending ill-balanced and feeble governments, came in happily from the other side of the water, to reinforce the argument for adopting something, and to dispel scruples of opponents, at least so far as to induce acquiescence in an experiment. It was only thus that the federal constitution escaped the jaws of death at its beginning; for there can be little doubt that, in the wavering state of opinion, the example of a positive rejection by Massachusetts would have been fatal to all prospect of its ratification by the requisite number of States.

If the eye of the critic be turned to the composition of this work, it must be conceded that it will be found defective in many particulars. No one was more conscious of this than the author. His own ideas of it are so characteristically expressed in a letter written at the time to his brother-in-law, Richard Cranch, himself a member of the Massachusetts convention the next year, as to deserve insertion at this place.

"Grosvenor Square, 15 January, 1787.

"My dear Brother, — Dr. Tufts will give you a strange book. I know not whether the sentiments of it will be approved by the men of sense and letters in America. If they are, they will make themselves popular in time. If they are not, our countrymen have many miseries to go through. If the system attempted to be defended in these letters is not the system of the wisest men among us, I shall tremble for the consequences, and wish myself in any obscure hole in the world. I am myself as clearly satisfied of the infallible truth of the doctrines there contained as I am of any demonstration in Euclid; and if our countrymen are bent upon any wild schemes inconsistent with the substance of it, the sooner they remove me out of their sight the better; for I can be of no service to them in promoting their views. I shall be anxious to know how it is received, and shall be obliged to you to inform me.

"I lament that it is so hasty a production. It is only since my return from Holland, in September, that I began to collect the materials. But the disturbances in New England made it necessary to publish immediately, in order to do any good. My friends in Holland were much employed in revolutions. In several conversations there, I had occasion to mention some things respecting governments which some of those gentlemen wished to see on paper. Their desire, falling in with the seditious meetings in the Massachusetts, determined me to write. The field is vast enough, the materials are splendid enough, and the subject is of weight enough, to employ the greatest scholar of the age for seven years. I am no great scholar, and have had but a few months' time; but I hope the men of genius and science in America will pursue the subject to more advantage. By the hurry and precipitation with which this work was undertaken, conducted and completed, I have been obliged to be too inattentive both to method and the ornaments of style for the present taste of our countrymen; for I perceive that taste and elegance are the cry. This appears to me like establishing manufactures of lace, fringe, and embroidery in a country, before there are any of silk, velvet, or cloth. Our countrymen are by no means advanced enough in solid science and learning, in mathematics and philosophy, in Greek and Latin, to devote so much of their time to rhetoric. The ignorance of old Mum-

mius, who threatened a master of a ship to compel him to replace the paintings of Apelles, if he lost them, would become us much better. I am no enemy to elegance, but I say no man has a right to think of elegance till he has secured substance; nor then, to seek more of it than he can afford. That taste which, for its gratification, will commit knavery and run in debt beyond the ability to pay, merits execration. That elegance which devours honor, truth, and independency, which scorns reputations and can reconcile itself to ignominy, public or private, is a monster that Hercules ought to destroy. If the courts of justice must be stopped at the point of the bayonet, if the laws must be trampled under foot to satisfy elegance, it is a demon that ought to be sent back to hell.

"'*Libertatem, amicitiam, fidem, præcipua humani animi bona*' — these are essential to human happiness. Finery of every kind may be dispensed with, until it can be reconciled to the other."

It may be observed, in passing from this letter, that the passage from Tacitus, quoted at the close, became such a favorite with Mr. Adams that he selected the first three words and the governing verb *retinebis*, as a motto for himself, which he caused to be engraved in various forms for his private use. They are taken from the address put into the mouth of the Emperor Galba by the historian, upon the adoption of Piso, as his heir, according to the forms of the Roman law; a fatal gift, as it proved, but conveyed in an address breathing so much of the early spirit of the republic as to elevate the speaker far above those either before or after him on the imperial throne.

A few words more will close all that it is deemed necessary to say of the "Defence of the American Constitutions." The transient interest in its pages, awakened by a sense of the necessities of government at the time, passed away with the adoption of the federal constitution. Another motive for perusing them succeeded, in the desire of political antagonists to find materials for impairing the influence of the author. To this end, not only the general tendency of the work was denounced as monarchical, but every passage in it was sedulously hunted up, which could be made to bear an invidious meaning. The obvious approbation of the distribution of powers in the British constitution

was used to justify an accusation, at one moment of a desire to introduce absolutism, at another, of favoring an aristocracy. These representations were attended with a considerable share of success for the time. But a calmer examination of the whole work will serve to show that there is no just ground for them. The object of it is to show the great danger of power concentrated in any one quarter, whether it be in the hands of a single chief, or in a select number, or in the multitude, as well as to recommend precautions against it by subdividing and thus neutralizing as much of the excess as possible. Hence the book, if studied for that object, would be found to yield quite as many texts against absolutism or aristocracy as against democracy. Such a result must inevitably flow from any discussion of the rights of men carried on with regard only to general principles, and independent of all local or temporary considerations. In this, as in other instances in his life, Mr. Adams followed his own convictions, without seeking to accommodate them to prevailing ideas of any kind. His speculations have now gone into the immense reservoir of human thought accumulated by ages, there to take the chance of confirmation or otherwise, as the cumulative experience and the impassible judgment of later generations shall see fit to determine. No interest remains to pervert them. Whether pronounced right or wrong, the verdict can only affect the correctness of his doctrines. It can make no difference with the estimate of his motives or of his character.

Passing from the view of the substance to the form, it must be admitted, that as a specimen of style, it has few attractions for the general reader, being in this respect inferior to most of the author's productions. It is defective in the arrangement, and in exposition of the arguments to establish the general conclusion. Much too great space is given to the minor details of the history of the small Italian republics of the middle ages, which were not necessary to prove what is made clear enough without them. For these reasons, it is not likely that it will attract to its pages many readers out of the limits of the very small class who study the science of government on a comprehensive scale. To these, this book will still recommend itself as a profound examination of the principles upon which mixed forms, like those of Great Britain and America, are established, and as a

treasury of just reflections and striking illustrations, appropriate to the general subject. Nobody has done so much to prove the fatal effect of vesting power in great masses in any single agency. No one has shown so clearly the necessity of enlisting the aid of the various classes of society to the support of a common cause, by giving to each of them a legitimate field of exertion; and no one has more impressively warned posterity of the consequences of permitting the rise of distinctions, thus setting the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, the gifted and the dull into opposition, without preserving ready means of restraint upon the violence of each. Over and above these recommendations, there are scattered here and there maxims of policy, and observations upon events and characters in history, both ancient and modern, well worthy to be stored in the mind of every man called to the office of a statesman. Strange as it may seem, this work supplied, in part, what was then a vacuum in literature, and what is not yet entirely filled. The later labors of Brougham, and Guizot, and De Tocqueville have added much to the stock of useful materials; but a philosophical and comprehensive treatment of all practicable forms of government, the joint offspring of learning and experience, remains to task the powers of some future genius, who, with the analytic power and the sententious wisdom of Montesquieu, will have a care to avoid his errors of precipitate generalization.

Whilst the leisure of Mr. Adams was thus absorbed in this interesting pursuit at home, it is not to be inferred that he did not derive much enjoyment from many of the events which were taking place in the world around him. The indifference of the court and ministers could not prevent him from enjoying the opportunities presented of witnessing the contests of eloquence almost daily occurring in the two houses of parliament. Mr. Adams heard Burke, and Pitt, and Fox, and Sheridan, and Camden, and was present at the opening of the solemn proceedings against Warren Hastings. It was the age of strong intellect in England. Nothing like it had occurred since the reign of Queen Anne, and nothing like it has been seen since. For the mind of the human race seems to be, in this respect, like the surface of the earth it inhabits, which must lie fallow at intervals between periods of excessive productiveness, in order

to recruit from its exhaustion. In addition to all these occupations and diversions, Mr. Adams was engaged, in conjunction with Mr. Jefferson, then minister to France, with whom he had established agreeable social relations, in the duty of negotiating treaties with the Barbary powers and procuring the liberation of many unfortunate prisoners taken by them. This relation gave rise to an interesting correspondence between the two gentlemen, a large portion of which has been already laid before the world.

But much as Mr. Adams might enjoy these superior opportunities for study and recreation in Great Britain, there was a single drop of bitterness apart from every thing in Europe, which came in to spoil his pleasure. For the love or hate, the kindness or neglect of the English he cared little, so long as he could feel that the country which he represented, and for whose cause he had staked so much, was doing her duty in the new position assumed by her before the nations. It was during his residence here that he was compelled daily to receive new proofs of her reluctance to fulfil her solemn engagements, and of her neglect to sustain her honor as he would have wished her to do. In his situation, all the arguments in extenuation of her deficiencies, her poverty, her exhaustion, her inability to unite the several States in one policy, would have been of no avail, had he condescended to use them; but he never did. He would have been proud to defend her to the last drop of his blood against every unjust charge, but he would not stoop to palliate or equivocate about her short-comings, when they were undeniable. His feelings upon this subject he did not seek to conceal from his friends at home. In a letter, addressed to Dr. Tufts, an uncle of Mrs. Adams, at the time a member of the senate of Massachusetts, he thus expressed himself on this topic: —

"As to politics, all that can be said is summarily comprehended in a few words. Our country is grown, or at least has been dishonest. She has broke her faith with nations, and with her own citizens; and parties are all about for continuing this dishonorable course. She must become strictly honest and punctual to all the world before she can recover the confidence of anybody at home or abroad. The duty of all good men is to join in making this doctrine popular, and in discountenancing

every attempt against it. This censure is too harsh, I suppose, for common ears, but the essence of these sentiments must be adopted throughout America before we can prosper. Have our people forgotten every principle of public and private credit? Do we trust a man in private life who is not punctual to his word? Who easily makes promises and is negligent to perform them? Especially if he makes promises knowing that he cannot perform them, or deliberately designing not to perform them?"

This was severe language towards his countrymen, but not unwarranted by much of the doctrine prevalent among the people of America at this period. A large number growing daily more restless under the bridle of the law, were encouraging each other to the last step of putting it at defiance, whilst others were resorting to more indirect but not less decisive means of annulling their obligations altogether. It was this relaxation of morals which gave Mr. Adams his moments of deep mortification as minister of the United States in London. Through life, his code as a public man was, on this subject, perfectly uniform. He never favored that species of logic, not infrequent among political leaders of all nations, whereby a different standard of right can be assumed at home from that which is proclaimed abroad, another rule acted upon individually from that which is presented in official station. He wished his country to be all that his dreams had pictured when advocating her independence; and finding that, as time went on, the prospect of his usefulness in his station became less and less, he determined, in 1787, to ask leave of congress to resign his trusts and to return home to private life. Letters of recall were accordingly sent out by congress in February, 1788. Not one of the important objects he had sought to gain in England had been effected. Supercilious indifference prevailed in the British councils. Alienation and not conciliation was the order of the day. The only compensation for a disappointment, which events rendered it utterly out of his power to prevent, was found in the receipt of a copy of a resolution adopted by congress, expressive of the sense entertained by that body of the value of his services during the ten years of his residence abroad. It was in these words:—

"Resolved, that congress entertain a high sense of the services which Mr. Adams has rendered to the United States, in the various important trusts which they have from time to time committed to him; and that the thanks of congress be presented to him for the patriotism, perseverance, integrity, and diligence, with which he hath ably and faithfully served his country."

CHAPTER IX.

Organization of the new Government — Election and Services as Vice-President of the United States.

On the 20th of April, 1788, Mr. Adams bade farewell to the shores of the ancient world. He returned to his native land to find it permanently freed from all dangers, excepting those which had their origin from within. He had quitted it the first time at the very crisis of the war. He came back to see it in the most critical moment of the peace. The political world had undergone, in the interval, a great revolution. Those questions which had agitated the people so long as independence was in doubt, had all passed away, and many of the men who appeared to lead at the beginning had vanished from the scene. But four of the members of congress who had signed their names to the Declaration in 1776 were members of the same body when the treaty of peace was submitted for ratification in 1783. It may fairly be doubted whether, in any modern government having a semblance of free institutions, the state of public feeling or the motives and principles that affect action ever continue for three years together the same. The passions of men cannot long endure a high degree of tension, and the decline of an excitement is invariably followed by indifference to a revival of the same emotion, as well as indisposition immediately to enter upon any new one. The peace had been received with joy, because it was regarded as a final object. Nothing further was needed to make America happy and prosperous. Hence there was little disposition to exertion. It was expected that the country would go on of itself. Great was then the disappointment to discover, at the end of four or five years, that independence had not done all that was hoped of it, that the people were not prosperous, that law and order were not so well established as they had been in the colonial days, that instead of im-

proving with time, things were visibly growing worse; and, lastly, that something was left to be done, or else the cherished independence was likely to turn out like the service of a wooden idol, an idle waste of labor and of emotions.

Neither was it difficult to understand what was the sort of action called for. The want was plain. There was no common principle harmonizing the action of the different States. The attempt to incorporate one in the old form of confederation had utterly failed. Some more vigorous restraint upon liberty was seen to be necessary by some, however reluctantly the idea might be welcomed by the great body of their disappointed countrymen. Forthwith a field of action opened itself, very different from the old one in 1774, and new persons came forward as leaders of opinion on one side and on the other. The first occasion upon which this change became outwardly visible, was upon the assembling of the convention to form a federal constitution. Here Mr. Madison and Mr. Hamilton attained the prominence which produced such important effects in the course of later events. Here is found the nucleus of the feelings which led to subsequent party divisions. Mr. Adams arrived at home only in time to witness the popular ratification of the instrument which emanated from their consultations. To him most of the actors who combined to frame it were almost, if not quite, strangers. But inasmuch as they had a powerful influence upon the remaining portion of his public life, it seems necessary to go into some explanation of the causes that operated to bring them into the places which they were called to fill.

The revolution of 1776, as has been mentioned heretofore, was effected through a union of colonies and individuals marching by no means with an equal pace to a common point, the rupture with Great Britain. The advance had been taken by Massachusetts, which led New England, and by a section of the planters of Virginia, headed by the Lees, Patrick Henry, Wythe, George Mason, and Jefferson, under whom rallied all the citizens of other colonies south of Maryland who sympathized with them. In the three southernmost States of New England only, was the whole community so inoculated with republican principles as to make the transition from the colonial to an independent state simple and easy. The emigration of the few who had formed connections with government or with

commercial interests at home, was not felt excepting as it removed the last restraint upon opinions always substantially democratic. The political power had ever been in the hands of the people. Such had not been the case elsewhere. The institutions of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, had cherished a privileged class, which formed an obstacle to the reception of the new ideas, not to be removed without a serious rent in the social system, at least in the first named States. That removal, gradually effected by the disappearance of numbers of the wealthy and more intelligent class, left a deficiency which was scarcely made good by the elevation to influence of persons of less education and experience. The transition to democracy, being sudden, was attended with a good deal of social disorder, rendering itself most visible in the violent contentions in Pennsylvania about the crude constitution, and the oaths against alteration, which had been so thoughtlessly adopted. Yet, before the peace, the new ideas had become well established, and the people, under their influence, had grown to be not less impatient of every restraint of individual action than jealous of the arrogation of any, even the most necessary power. They had therefore arrived at about the same anarchical condition, into which the Eastern people, for a different reason, soon after fell. Exhausted by the war and the derangement of all useful industry, the forms which executed justice soon became equally hateful with those which had labored to impose a tyranny. It was the upheaving of the poorest classes to throw off all law of debtor and creditor, which brought about the successful effort to organize the federal government anew, as a bridle upon their license. They never favored it beforehand, nor cordially approved it afterwards, during their day and generation. The federal convention was the work of the commercial people in the seaport towns, of the planters of the slaveholding States, of the officers of the revolutionary army, and the property holders everywhere. And these parties could never have been strong enough of themselves to procure the general adoption of the instrument which they matured, had it not been that the open insurrection in Massachusetts, and the assemblages threatening to shut up the courts of justice in other States, had thrown the intermediate body of quiet citizens of every shade of opinion, in panic, all on their

side. It was under the effect of this panic, that the delegates had been elected, and that they acted. The vibration of the pendulum may be most distinctly measured by the language of such men as James Madison and Elbridge Gerry, at all other periods of their lives the exponents of popular opinions. And taking these as the type of the most moderate party, the extent to which the ideas must have reached among the habitual advocates of a strong government, may readily be conceived. The federal constitution was the offspring of compromises made under these circumstances. Although reduced in tone far below the level of opinion of one class, there can be no doubt that it was still considerably above that which prevailed in the country at large. And it may very fairly be questioned, whether any period has occurred before or since, with perhaps one brief exception of extraordinary unanimity, when it could have succeeded, even as it did then, in fighting its way through the ordeal of the ratifying conventions.

From this moment is then to be dated a new epoch in the history of the United States. And in the friends of the new constitution, denominated *federalists*, as well as in its opponents, called *anti-federalists*, are to be seen the germs of the great political division of the country, which now sprang up and continued to prevail during the existence of at least one generation of men.

In the distribution of individuals upon one side or the other of this line, it is not to be supposed that many anomalies did not occur. That among the opponents of the constitution are to be ranked a great majority of those who had most strenuously fought the battle of independence of Great Britain, is certain. The sentiment that animated them having its nourishment in a single root, the jealousy of power, imparted a homogeneous character to their movements, which the opposite side never could possess. Among the federalists, it is true, were to be found a large body of the patriots of the Revolution, almost all the general officers who survived the war, and a great number of the substantial citizens along the line of the seaboard towns and populous regions, all of whom had heartily sympathized in the policy of resistance. But these could never have succeeded in effecting the establishment of the constitution, had they not received the active and steady coöperation of all that was left in America of

attachment to the mother country, as well as of the moneyed interest, which ever points to strong government as surely as the needle to the pole. As a consequence, there was from the beginning a line of division within the ranks of the government party, which did not fail to make itself more and more visible with the progress of time. The course of John Adams, like that of Jefferson and Samuel Adams, previous to 1783, had been much the most closely allied with that of the enemies of the constitution, of whom Patrick Henry, and the Lees, and Gerry, and George Clinton were the most prominent representatives; but his bitter experience of the want of a government to sustain the national honor in Europe, and his lifelong attachment to the tripartite or English theory, combined, on his return, to place him warmly on the side of its friends. He, too, had felt the reaction, which had carried even Jefferson, and Madison, and Gerry into the approbation of sentiments rather out of line with the rest of their public life. And embracing the cause with his customary ardor, he was naturally brought into greater prominence as a supporter of the new system in Massachusetts, from the fact that there it had met with much difficulty to make its way. Almost on the instant of his return, he had been elected to a place in the old congress. But that body had fallen into the last stages of dissolution, with its sessions continued only for form's sake, so that he never took his seat. In the mean while, the necessary elections were in progress to set agoing the new organization, and the time approached to determine the important question, who should be the two men selected by the general voice to fill the most prominent posts established by the plan.

The constitution, in its original form, required that the votes of the Electoral Colleges should point out these two persons, without assigning their relative places. That question was left to be determined by the greater or less number of suffrages which they might respectively obtain. The obvious motive for this arrangement was, to secure a second person in the far inferior place, who might be depended upon, in case of necessity, suitably to fill the first. And in this it was certainly more successful than the provision since substituted has proved. Here, however, its beneficial nature ended, for in every other respect it proved the fertile mother of abuses, some of which

were not slow to show themselves even on the very first opportunity. With respect to the nomination of one of the two individuals, and him whom it was the desire alike of all the electors and the people at large to see placed at the head of the government, there was no manner of doubt in any mind. George Washington was the man, and there could be no other. No similar unanimity was to be expected in the selection of any second person; hence there could be no ambiguity about his destination. The question then fell down to the comparatively small matter, who should be the Vice-President. Geographical considerations prompted the selection in a quarter opposite to that which was to give the President, and the prominence of Massachusetts in the revolutionary struggle pointed that State out as the one from which it might properly be made. Among the distinguished statesmen within her limits, three stood forth broadly in the public eye. These were Hancock, and Samuel and John Adams. But neither Hancock nor Samuel Adams had manifested a very hearty good-will to the new constitution, or had done much more than to acquiesce in supporting it as a dubious experiment. Nor yet had they the advantage of the long and brilliant course of foreign services rendered before the eyes of the whole country, which recommended the third individual. As a consequence, John Adams united a far greater number of votes than either, or than any other man. But he did not obtain a majority. Only thirty-four out of sixty-nine electors named him. The other thirty-five votes were scattered at random among ten individuals, no one of whom obtained more than nine. But by the terms of the constitution, even this was decisive; so that Mr. Adams became the first Vice-President of the United States.

This narration is of great importance to the right conception of the later history, because in it is to be found the first trace of the opposition of sentiment which ultimately destroyed the federal party. Had the choice been left entirely to the predilections of the electors, without an effort to direct it, or to regulate the mode in which it was to be made, there can be no doubt that, whatever the issue might have been, everybody would have cheerfully acquiesced in it. In New England, and throughout the Union, the great body of those friends of the constitution who had been in the habit of reposing confidence

in Mr. Adams as a leader in the Revolution, would probably have found a voice in the Electoral Colleges, which might or might not have decided the choice in his favor. At any rate, they would have proved hearty in supporting him. The case was widely different with another class, who had not harmonized with him during the struggle, and who now regulated their course upon very different considerations from those of personal preference. Of this class, Alexander Hamilton was rapidly becoming the representative and the spokesman. Active and energetic in promoting the adoption of the constitution itself, in the success of which, as an experiment, he entertained but a feeble confidence, his natural ardor impelled him to the exercise of what influence he could command in the further and more delicate task of shaping the manner in which, and designating the men through whom, it should first be carried into operation. Coinciding with the rest of the world in the nomination of Washington for the chief position, his activity seems to have been exerted mainly to the point of determining the relation the second officer was to bear to the first. Towards the prominent men of Massachusetts, between whom his sagacity perceived the choice to lie, he was, at best, indifferent. But he had not lost the old impressions obtained in the army, first against New England generally, and next against the Lees and the Adamses as caballing against Washington in the Revolution, and therefore looked with great distrust upon the prospect of placing one of the latter in a situation of power to embarrass the new government.[1] Reassured on this point by his friend Sedgwick, of Massachusetts, as well as by his own belief, that "to a sound understanding Mr. Adams joined an ardent love for the public good,"[2] he determined upon giving him the preference. But he did it, subject to a refinement in policy, by which Mr. Adams was to be brought into place with as little of the appearance of equality with the President in the popular esteem as possible.[3] The idea of any equalization of electoral votes, from which a possible danger to Washington's election could be apprehended, was preposterous. It is plain that he

[1] Hamilton to Sedgwick, *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. i. p. 482.
[2] Ib. p. 487.
[3] Hamilton to Madison, ib. p. 489.

never entertained it.[1] His exertions, to subtract votes from the number which would otherwise have been given to Mr. Adams, must then be traced to some other motive; and there is none, on the whole, so probable as the desire to keep a check over the political influence of the second officer in the new government, should he prove to incline at last to embarrass the chief by his opposition. They were effective in New Jersey and Connecticut,[2] not to say elsewhere, and to the extent of giving to Mr. Adams the appearance of being chosen by less than a majority of the electors.

In the remarkable correspondence on this subject between Mr. Hamilton and his friends, a portion of which has been lately disclosed, it is a singular coincidence that Mr. Adams should have been recommended by Mr. Sedgwick, though not among his partisans, on the ground that he was "a man of unconquerable intrepidity and of incorruptible integrity," and that the same gentleman should, twelve years later, have been one of the leading actors in, as well as the most discontented with the issue of, the greatest trial to which that intrepidity was ever subjected. He little foresaw, that in urging Mr. Hamilton to prefer Mr. Adams for these qualities, he was opposing to that gentleman's natural aspirations for command the only effectual barrier remaining within the reach of the federalists, and sowing the seeds of a division which was to end in the complete overthrow of the power of them all. The peculiar mode in which Mr. Hamilton thought it proper to concede that preference was the first great political error which he committed. Mr. Adams very naturally felt that the process of deducting, in a clandestine manner, from the votes which but for that would have been given to him, was ominous of imperfect faith; and he complained that he had been exposed to the world as the choice of a minority of the electors, when, except for positive interference, he would have received at least forty-one, and probably more, of the sixty-nine. This complaint, scarcely unreasonable in itself, it would have been more prudent in a public man not to express even in the privacy of the domestic circle; but Mr. Adams, never a calculating politician, was not in the habit, excepting

[1] Hamilton to Sedgwick, *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. i. p. 491.

[2] Wadsworth to Hamilton, ib. p. 492. See also J. Trumbull to J. Adams, in this work, vol. viii. p. 484, note.

in the most critical cases, of suppressing his feelings. The consequence was, that his unguarded language was tortured to justify the inference that he was dissatisfied at not having been permitted the chance to receive as many votes as General Washington. This again came back to his knowledge, and another element of mutual distrust entered into the counsels of those who were destined to act together.

Yet these causes, though beginning to operate at this time, produced no perceptible effects until long afterwards. Neither is it just to suppose that Mr. Adams attached much importance to them at first. He was satisfied with the honors conferred upon him, little as the labors of the post were adequate to a man of his abundant energies. No high situation in the government of the United States could now be so easily lopped off without missing it, as that of the Vice-President. Its only consequence depends upon the contingency of a succession to the chief office. It was not by any means so insignificant, however, when Mr. Adams was first chosen, as it has been in later times. Mr. Hamilton had not overrated the importance of filling it with a steady friend. At that moment, the machine of government was to be set in motion, and it was material that all the principal parts should be put in a condition to work kindly together. The grand fact, of a serious division of public opinion upon its merits, and of the existence of a large body of the people ready from the outset to condemn it, was universally understood. It made itself painfully visible in the return of the individuals selected to serve in both branches of the legislature. Although the lines were not then so sharply defined as afterwards, and in spite of the overruling influence of the name of Washington, there was reason to apprehend that the men who feared the constitution, would be nearly if not quite as numerous in congress as those who trusted it. This was particularly the case in the senate, over which body the Vice-President was required to act as the presiding officer. The assembly consisted, at the outset, only of twenty-two, out of whom the number of those who had favored the policy of enlarging the powers of government scarcely exceeded that of those who maintained the propriety of restricting them. This difference, from which the constitution had narrowly escaped shipwreck at the start, made itself felt in every part of the organizing process

that formed the main business of the first congress. The creation of the various subordinate branches of the executive department, especially that of the treasury, the establishment of order in the finances, where nothing of the kind could be made to prevail under the old system, the construction of a plan for raising a revenue, the consolidation of all outstanding obligations that had been incurred during the struggle, and the marking out of the complicated channels for the administration of justice in the federal courts, all devolved upon it. The first instance in which opposition developed itself by close divisions in both Houses, occurred in the case of the law proposed to organize the Department of Foreign Affairs. The question most earnestly disputed turned upon the power vested by the constitution in the President to remove the person at the head of that bureau, at his pleasure. One party maintained it was an absolute right. The other insisted that it was subject to the same restriction of a ratification by the senate which is required when the officer is appointed. After a long contest in the house of representatives, terminating in favor of the unrestricted construction, the bill came up to the senate for its approbation.

This case was peculiar and highly important. By an anomaly in the constitution, which, upon any recognized theory, it is difficult to defend, the senate, which, in the last resort, is made the judicial tribunal to try the President for malversation in office, is likewise clothed with a power of denying him the agents in whom he may choose most to confide for the faithful execution of the duties of his station, and forcing him to select such as they may prefer. If, in addition to this, the power of displacing such as he found unworthy of trust had been subjected to the same control, it cannot admit of a doubt that the government must, in course of time, have become an oligarchy, in which the President would sink into a mere instrument of any faction that might happen to be in the ascendant in the senate. This, too, at the same time that he would be subject to be tried by them for offences in his department, over which he could exercise no effective restraint whatever. In such case, the alternative is inevitable, either that he would have become a confederate with that faction, and therefore utterly beyond the reach of punishment by impeachment at their hands, for offences committed with their privity, if not at their dictation, or else, in

case of his refusal, that he would have been powerless to defend himself against the paralyzing operation of their ill-will. Such a state of subjection in the executive head to the legislature is subversive of all ideas of a balance of powers drawn from the theory of the British constitution, and renders probable at any moment a collision, in which one side or the other, and it is most likely to be the legislature, must be ultimately annihilated.

Yet, however true these views may be in the abstract, it would scarcely have caused surprise if their soundness had not been appreciated in the senate. The temptation to magnify their authority is commonly all-powerful with public bodies of every kind. In any other stage of the present government than the first, it would have proved quite irresistible. But throughout the administration of General Washington, there is visible among public men a degree of indifference to power and place, which forms one of the most marked features of that time. More than once the highest cabinet and foreign appointments went begging to suitable candidates, and begged in vain. To this fact it is owing, that public questions of such moment were then discussed with as much of personal disinterestedness as can probably ever be expected to enter into them anywhere. Yet even with all these favoring circumstances it soon became clear that the republican jealousy of a centralization of power in the President would combine with the *esprit de corps* to rally at least half the senate in favor of subjecting removals to their control. In such a case, the responsibility of deciding the point devolved, by the terms of the constitution, upon Mr. Adams, as Vice-President. The debate was continued from the 15th to the 18th of July, a very long time for that day in an assembly comprising only twenty-two members when full, but seldom more than twenty in attendance. A very brief abstract, the only one that has yet seen the light, is furnished in the third volume of the present work. Mr. Adams appears to have made it for the purpose of framing his own judgment in the contingency which he must have foreseen as likely to occur. The final vote was taken on the 18th. Nine senators voted to subject the President's power of removal to the will of the senate; Messrs. Few, Grayson, Gunn, Johnson, Izard, Langdon, Lee, Maclay, and Wingate. On the other hand, nine senators voted against claiming the restriction;

Messrs. Bassett, Carroll, Dalton, Elmer, Henry, Morris, Paterson, Read, and Strong. The result depended upon the voice of the Vice-President. It was the first time that he had been summoned to such a duty. It was the only time, during his eight years of service in that place, that he felt the case to be of such importance as to justify his assigning reasons for his vote. These reasons were not committed to paper, however, and can therefore never be known. But in their soundness it is certain that he never had the shadow of a doubt. His decision settled the question of constitutional power in favor of the President, and consequently established the practice under the government, which has continued down to this day. Although there have been occasional exceptions taken to it in argument, especially at moments when the executive power, wielded by a strong hand, seemed to encroach upon the limits of the coördinate departments, its substantial correctness has been, on the whole, quite generally acquiesced in. And all have agreed, that no single act of the first congress has been attended with more important effects upon the working of every part of the government.

But though this was the first and the most important case in which the casting vote of the Vice-President was invoked to settle the details of organization, it was by no means the only one during the time Mr. Adams presided over the senate. Very seldom was the majority on disputed points more than two; and four times, during this session, the numbers stood nine against nine. At the second session, his casting vote was called for, twelve, at the third, four times, making twenty times during the first congress, and always upon points of importance in the organic laws. The services thus rendered make little figure on the records; but the effect of them, in smoothing away, at a critical moment, many of the obstacles to the establishment of the government, will continue to be felt so long as the form itself shall endure.

President Washington, anxious to unite the feelings of the people, began his administration by calling into his cabinet the leading exponents of opposite opinions. In this way, Thomas Jefferson was placed at the head of the foreign office, and Alexander Hamilton took the direction of the finances. The harmony hoped for did not follow. No possible circumstances,

short of a renewal of the struggle for independence, could have availed to produce it. Both the persons named were men of the first class of minds, but they had little else in common. Neither could bear the ascendency of the other, or submit to be overruled without resentment. The consequence was, in the secret councils of the first administration, a perpetual conflict of opinions, which the imposing presence of the chief could barely prevent from breaking over every limit. Neither could this state of feeling continue in the cabinet without soon extending itself into the ranks of those who sympathized with the respective combatants, and spreading from them among the people at large. For they were both representatives of ideas, and not merely of persons. The forms which this antagonism took, naturally followed the two lines of action in which the abilities of the combatants had been called into exercise; but unforeseen and extrinsic circumstances contributed greatly to increase its intensity. To Mr. Hamilton the difficult task had been assigned of drawing order out of the chaos of the finances. He did so by proposing plans for funding the public debt, for the assumption of the state debts, for a national bank, a system of revenue from taxation internal and external, and a sinking fund. These plans all equally bristled with points of irritation to a large class of men, of whom Mr. Jefferson was soon regarded by the public as the natural head. They were opposed in both houses of congress with such pertinacity as barely to escape defeat.

Here again the influence of Mr. Adams became important. There can be no doubt that it would have turned the scale, had it been exerted in opposition. But though not in all cases entirely agreeing in sentiment with Mr. Hamilton on these subjects, and in some particulars holding very strong opposing opinions, he felt the necessity, to the very salvation of the machine of government, of sustaining some general system at once, and therefore gave a cordial and hearty support to this as the most practicable plan. The steady and uniform manner in which he rendered it, always valuable to a public man when seeking the attainment of important results against active resistance, seems to have worked so far on the feelings of Mr. Hamilton as for the moment to dispel the distrust he had entertained of him at the outset of the government. When the time approached at which it became necessary to point out candidates

for reëlection to the chief offices, he not only desisted from any further attempt to subtract from the number of electoral votes Mr. Adams might be likely to obtain, but he even solicited for him a general support, as "a firm, honest, and independent politician."[1] This tribute it is important to bear in mind in a later stage of the narrative, when Mr. Hamilton found occasion for dissatisfaction in the exercise, in his own case, of these very qualities which he now commended.

But whatever may have been the state of the public mind caused by those financial questions which were determined in the course of the first administration of General Washington, it did not, nor, with the exception, perhaps, of direct taxation, can such matters in themselves ever, excite a very deep agitation of the popular passions. Neither is it possible to expect much duration of discontent after the measures in dispute begin sensibly to connect themselves with the national prosperity. It could not be denied that the revival of confidence consequent upon them acted like magic upon industry, and began that great development of material wealth which has gone on with almost unbroken continuance to this day. Whether Mr. Hamilton's plans caused this change, or whether, if they did, they were the best that could have been devised, became speculations only for the curious. At all events, they were followed by the desired effect. The commercial and moneyed interests, which were the first to feel it, at once rallied around Mr. Hamilton as their benefactor, and they never deserted him afterwards. A new power arose, that of the fundholders, the rapid increase of which inspired Mr. Jefferson with alarm and a determination to resist it. But all his opposition would have availed little, had it not been for a new and extraordinary disturbing force, which came in to aid him by giving another course to the public feeling. This was the French revolution.

This moral earthquake was, at the outset, hailed by the people of America, with Washington at their head, as the harbinger of a new era of republican liberty. Their sympathies, quickened by the remembrance of the aid received in the days of their own tribulation, and warmed by visions of a brilliant futurity, not only prompted earnest prayers for the success of the French

[1] Hamilton to C. C. Pinckney, Hamilton's *Works*, vol. v. p. 533.

republicans, but dictated assistance, in case of emergency growing out of the pressure of the monarchical combinations against them. On the other hand, the supercilious and neglectful conduct of Great Britain towards them since the peace, had only contributed to confirm their sentiments of alienation and dislike in that quarter. Of this attraction towards the one nation and repulsion from the other, Thomas Jefferson was the natural exponent in America; whilst his official position made him necessarily prominent as a guide and adviser in framing the incipient relations of the country with both. A brilliant rather than a just thinker, the necessary consequence of a mind more comprehensive than true, the sanguine visions of a glorious issue from the French revolution were slow with him in vanishing. Neither did they disappear at last without leaving an impression upon his mind, and upon that of the large class in America who followed him, that his calculations had been well founded, and that the disastrous failure, which so grievously disappointed him, was chargeable to accident rather than any intrinsic cause.

Here is the great point of divergence in the action of Mr. Adams, which most strongly illustrates the difference of character between him and Mr. Jefferson. Not called, in his official position, to take any part in directing the opinions of others, he could not forbear to express his own. The phenomena in France had never, from the outset, roused his enthusiasm, for he had early detected the element of destructiveness which they contained. Before Burke had ever ventured to interpose, with his giant's strength, to stay the torrent of passion then threatening to submerge all Europe, he had predicted that the experiment of self-government, upon which the French had entered, would fail. In a letter to Dr. Price, acknowledging the reception of a copy of the discourse, which first drove Burke into this field of controversy, he used these memorable words: —

"I know that encyclopedists and economists, Diderot and D'Alembert, Voltaire and Rousseau, have contributed to this great event more than Sidney, Locke, or Hoadly, perhaps more than the American Revolution; and I own to you, I know not what to make of a republic of thirty million atheists." . . . . .
"Too many Frenchmen, after the example of too many Americans, pant for equality of persons and property. The impra-

ticability of this, God Almighty has decreed, and the advocates for liberty who attempt it will surely suffer for it."

It would be difficult, in smaller compass, to point out the sources of the calamities that followed. The writer had never sympathized with the speculations of the class of French writers to which he refers. Mr. Jefferson, on the contrary, naturally coincided with their views. Their want of a warm and yet restraining religious faith raised no ripple of distrust, for no image of the sort ever came reflected from his own mind; whilst Mr. Adams's strong convictions of the impossibility of maintaining an equality of condition in any civilized society, savored to him of a backsliding into absolutism, which he ever afterwards laid to his charge. But this suspicion of Mr. Jefferson was really founded in a misconception of Mr. Adams's whole cast of mind, which had been formed in the mould of the English writers, some of whom he names in his letter to Dr. Price, and which never relished the vague and fanciful speculations of the French school.

There was, in this particular, a clear opposition in the systems of the two men; the only one, it should be remarked, that was really developed in the course of their singularly blended career. So long as the causes of this division continued to operate, the separation between them grew wider and wider. Mr. Adams took up his pen, and furnished to the columns of a newspaper in Philadelphia a series of papers containing an analysis of Davila's History of the civil convulsions of France in the sixteenth century, which he wrote to illustrate more fully the dangers from powerful factions in ill-balanced forms of government. In this doctrine, Mr. Jefferson saw visions of an impending monarchy, which he sought to dissipate, not directly, but by secretly instigating the adoption, as an antidote, of Thomas Paine's "Rights of Man," just then published in Great Britain. The accidental exposure of this interference, on the first page of that pamphlet, as reprinted in Philadelphia, brought another champion into the field to complicate the action. The papers of Publicola, written by John Quincy Adams, then a young lawyer in Boston, without any communication with his father, and first printed in a newspaper of that town, attracted great attention everywhere. They were reprinted in New York and Philadelphia, afterwards collected by Stockdale, in Lon-

don, and published there as the work of John Adams. They were not his, however, excepting so far as the son might have imbibed with his growth the principles which animated the father through life. Those principles were widely remote from the doctrines of Paine. They seemed to Mr. Jefferson like adding fuel to the funeral pile of liberty; and the whole force of his friends was soon concentrated to resist their progress. The Adamses, on the other hand, denying the justice of this imputation, regarded Mr. Jefferson's support of Paine as bordering too closely upon social disintegration, and favoring a mere popular tyranny. Thus came about the joining of that issue upon fundamental principles in America, which must ever take place under all forms of free government, so long as human society shall remain what it is. The conservative and the democratic republic may be considered as the general types which have from that day to this marshalled the respective divisions of the people of the United States in opposition to each other, when not affected by disturbing influences from without.

The habits of Washington, his military life and his social relations, naturally placed him in the conservative class; and as the wild disorders of the revolution more and more developed themselves in France, as well as through the troublesome intrigues of M. Genet nearer home, he became more and more alienated from the views which Mr. Jefferson was known to favor. That gentleman had, as Secretary of State, nevertheless persevered in executing the policy laid down for the administration during its first term of office, and had very faithfully maintained the reputation of the country, equally well against the impertinent aggressiveness of M. Genet, the envoy of democratic France, and the supercilious arrogance of Mr. Hammond, the representative of British aristocracy. This had not been done, however, without the occurrence of dissensions within the cabinet, and a sense of the growing preponderance of opinions opposite to his, that threatened daily to fix him more firmly the champion of a policy with which he had no sympathy, and the promotion of which was felt by his friends as well as himself to be fatal to the maintenance of his own.

The second election of President and Vice-President passed away; and Mr. Adams, against whom the only demonstration of opposition was made, came in over George Clinton, set up

as his competitor, by a decided preponderance in the Electoral Colleges. For Mr. Jefferson to continue longer in the cabinet in which his influence was sinking, was not only distasteful to himself, but was putting a restraint on the ardor of opposition, and impairing the energies of his friends, without any compensating prospect of good. He determined to withdraw; and his act became the signal for the consolidation of the party, which looked to him as its chief. Broad and general ground was now taken against the whole policy of the administration, and the arrows, restrained within the quiver so long as he remained liable to be hit, were now drawn forth and sharpened for use even against Washington himself.

Neither was Jefferson wanting, in this crisis, to his duty of a commander in the war. As he stepped from the threshold of office, he gave the requisite plan of the campaign. It was contained in his celebrated report upon the commercial relations of the country with foreign nations, the drift of which was favorable to France and adverse to Great Britain. The able reasoning which it contained, received new force from the hostility manifested by the latter country to American commerce. No sooner was war declared by her with France, than she began to play the tyrant over weaker nations on the ocean, by Orders in Council designed to harass the trade of neutrals with her enemy. Of course, the sympathy with France and the disgust with England proportionally increased in America, and naturally struck into the channel formed for them by Mr. Jefferson. Fortunately for him, he had an auxiliary then in the house of representatives, possessed of singular judgment and skill, upon whom the lead of the opposition devolved, and to whose dexterity and calmness, as a legislator, in tempering in action his own tendencies to extravagance in theory, much of his success must be ascribed. With far less of original genius, Mr. Madison was a more cautious counsellor and a more prudent administrator. The house of representatives assembled in 1794, in a temper to adopt any measures against Great Britain, however hostile. It was soon evident that some discriminating act to favor the commerce with France at her expense, a natural consequence of the reasoning of Mr. Jefferson's report, would meet the approbation of a majority. The only question was upon the extent to which it should be carried. Considering the violence

of the various propositions brought to light, General Washington felt at once the embarrassments into which they might plunge him. He had already defined for the country a policy of absolute neutrality. But here was, on the other hand, what threatened to entail upon it an indefinite entanglement in war. Some immediate action was necessary in order to avert the danger. He determined upon resorting to an extraordinary measure.

This measure was the nomination of the chief justice of the supreme court of the United States, John Jay, as a special ambassador to the court of Great Britain, for the purpose of attempting some settlement of the questions in dispute by a treaty. It checked, without extinguishing the ardor of the majority, who went on, nevertheless, to adopt a bill prohibiting the admission of all the commodities of Great Britain, until the grievances complained of should be entirely redressed by her. Had this measure been carried through both branches of the legislature, there can be little doubt that it would have rendered the mission of Mr. Jay wholly abortive. The effect must have been to involve the United States, as a party, in the terrific contest then just beginning between the great powers of Europe. Peace depended upon the action of the senate, and the senate was almost equally divided. When the question came up for decision, on the 28th of April, upon two or three preliminary divisions, the opposition did not appear to rally; but, on the passage of the bill to a third reading, the vote stood thirteen to thirteen. The Vice-President then exercised his privilege of a casting vote, and the measure was defeated. Only second in importance to this was his action, a month or more before that time, upon a bill from the Lower House, designed to put a stop to daring violations of neutrality, like those which M. Genet, relying upon the popular connivance, had already perpetrated with impunity. Such a measure was demanded by government, as a proof of its good faith, in issuing the proclamation which it had done, declaring its policy to be rigid neutrality. But it met with a stiff resistance in the senate, and three times the casting vote of the Vice-President was required and given to secure its safety.

This great power lodged with the Vice-President has never been brought into exercise by any subsequent occupant of the

presiding chair of the senate to the same extent that it was whilst Mr. Adams filled the office. An examination of the journals shows that this took place almost entirely during his first term of office. It happened to him, however, to be called upon six times during the session now in question, after which the federalists gained enough upon their opponents to prevent its use so often. But three cases occur in the remaining three years.

Though in some respects irksome, the duties of the second office in the United States are not laborious. They give no scope to the peculiar talents in debate which had distinguished Mr. Adams in the early congress, and they impose silence, calmness, and impartiality, virtues, the practice of which was by no means in unison with his natural disposition strongly to take a side, and ardently to advocate it. Yet, difficult and delicate as was his situation between parties so equally balanced, he seems to have succeeded in performing his task to the acceptance of all. And although complaining from time to time of the meagre compensation allowed him upon which to maintain his family, as well as himself, on the scale which had been established at the outset of the new government, he seems never at any period of his life to have been more happy and light-hearted. The best idea of it may be obtained by extracts taken from his private correspondence with Mrs. Adams at such times as she was not with him at Philadelphia. They abound in quiet strokes of humor and keen observation, which do not appear in his other writings, interspersed with the same characteristic truth and nobleness of feeling which are found elsewhere. They come in particularly well at this time, to break the monotony of the narrative, whilst they help to illustrate the history of the events that were taking place. They date from the commencement of the congressional session of 1793–94, some acts of which have been already noticed.

"Philadelphia, 5 December, 1793.

"The President's speech will show you an abundance of serious business which we have before us. Mr. Jefferson called on me last night, and informed me that to-day we should have the whole budget of foreign affairs, British as well as French. He seems as little satisfied with the conduct of the French minister as any one.

"The Viscount Noailles called on me, and I inquired after all his connections, in a family which I knew to be once in great power, wealth, and splendor. He seems to despair of liberty in France, and has lost, apparently, all hopes of ever living in France. He was very critical in his inquiries concerning the letters which were printed as mine in England. I told him candidly that I did not write them, and as frankly, in confidence, who did.[1] He says they made a great impression upon the people of England; that he heard Mr. Windham and Mr. Fox speak of them as the best thing that had been written, and as one of the best pieces of reasoning and style they had ever read. The Marquis (de Lafayette), he says, is living, but injured in his health. Your old friend, the Marchioness, still lives in France in obscurity in the country. He thinks that a constitution, like that of England, would not last three days in France, and that monarchy will not be restored in a dozen years, if ever. The partitioning and arbitrary spirit of the combined powers will contribute more than any thing towards uniting the French under their old government. Frenchmen cannot bear the partition of their country; and rather than see it divided among their neighbors, they will unite in something or other.

"It will require all the address, all the temper, and all the firmness of congress and the States, to keep this people out of the war; or, rather, to avoid a declaration of war against us, from some mischievous power or other. It is but little that I can do, either by the functions which the constitution has intrusted to me, or by my personal influence; but that little shall be industriously employed, until it is put beyond a doubt that it will be fruitless; and then I shall be as ready to meet unavoidable calamities as any other citizen."

"19 December, 1793.

"Citizen Genet made me a visit yesterday while I was in senate, and left his card. I shall leave mine at his hotel to-morrow, as several of the senators have already hastened to return their visits. But we shall be in an awkward situation with this minister. I write you little concerning public affairs, because you will have every thing in print. How a government can go on, publishing all their negotiations with foreign

[1] The papers signed Publicola, heretofore mentioned as written by John Quincy Adams. See p. 454.

nations, I know not. To me it appears as dangerous and pernicious as it is novel; but upon this occasion it could not, perhaps, have been avoided. You know where I think was the error in the first concoction. But such errors are unavoidable where the people, in crowds out of doors, undertake to receive ambassadors, and to dictate to their supreme executive.

"I know not how it is, but in proportion as dangers threaten the public, I grow calm. I am very apprehensive that a desperate anti-federal party will provoke all Europe by their insolence. But my country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived. And as I can do neither good nor evil, I must be borne away by others, and meet the common fate.

"The President has considered the conduct of Genet very nearly in the same light with Columbus,[1] and has given him a bolt of thunder. We shall see how this is supported by the two Houses. There are, who gnash their teeth with rage which they dare not own as yet. We shall soon see whether we have any government or not in this country. If the President has made any mistake at all, it is by too much partiality for the French republicans, and in not preserving a neutrality between the parties in France, as well as among the belligerent powers. But although he stands at present as high in the admiration and confidence of the people as ever he did, I expect he will find many bitter and desperate enemies arise in consequence of his just judgment against Genet. Besides that a party spirit will convert white into black, and right into wrong, we have, I fear, very corrupt individuals in this country, independent of the common spirit of party. The common movements of ambition every day disclose to me views and hopes and designs that are very diverting; but these I will not commit to paper. They make sometimes a very pretty farce, for amusement after the great tragedy or comedy is over.

"What I write to you, must be in sacred confidence and strict discretion."

"2 January, 1794.

"Our anti-federal scribblers are so fond of rotation, that they seem disposed to remove their abuse from me to the President.

[1] Other papers written by J. Q. Adams, at this time, in the *Boston Centinel.*

Bache's paper, which is nearly as bad as Freneau's, begins to join in concert with it to maul the President for his drawing-rooms, levees, declining to accept of invitations to dinners and tea parties, his birthday odes, visits, compliments, &c. I may be expected to be an advocate for a rotation of objects of abuse, and for equality in this particular. I have held the office of libellee-general long enough. The burden of it ought to be participated and equalized, according to modern republican principles.

"The news from France, so glorious for the French army, is celebrated in loud peals of festivity, and elevates the spirits of the enemies of government among us more than it ought; for it will not answer their ends. We shall now see the form of the French republic. Their conventions will have many trials to make before they will come at any thing permanent. The calamities of France are not over. I shall claim the merit of some little accuracy of foresight when I see General Lincoln, who, you remember, was inclined to think the Duke of Brunswick's march to Paris certain; while I was apprehensive that the numerous fortified towns in his way would waste his army, and consume the campaign.

"We shall soon see the operation in France of elections to first magistracies. My attention is fixed to this object. I have no doubt of its effects; but it is a curious question, how long they can last. We have lately seen how they have succeeded in New York, and what effect that election has had upon the votes for President. Cabal, intrigue, manœuvre, as bad as any species of corruption, we have already seen in our elections; and when and where will they stop?"

"9 January, 1794.

"The news of this evening is, that the Queen of France is no more. When will savages be satiated with blood? No prospect of peace in Europe, and therefore none of internal harmony in America. We cannot well be in a more disagreeable situation than we are with all Europe, with all Indians, and with all Barbary rovers. Nearly one half the continent is in constant opposition to the other, and the President's situation, which is highly responsible, is very distressing. He made me a very friendly visit yesterday, which I returned to-day, and had two hours' conversation with him alone in his cabinet. The conver-

sation, which was extremely interesting, and equally affectionate, I cannot explain even by a hint. But his earnest desire to do right, and his close application to discover it, his deliberate and comprehensive view of our affairs with all the world, appeared in a very amiable and respectable light. The anti-federalists and the frenchified zealots have nothing now to do, that I can conceive of, but to ruin his character, destroy his peace, and injure his health. He supports all their attacks with great firmness, and his health appears to be very good. The Jacobins would make a sortie upon him in all the force they could muster, if they dared."

The allusions in the next extract are to Samuel Adams, at this time lieutenant-governor of Massachusetts, but whom the recent death of the governor, Hancock, had placed in the executive chair for the remainder of the political year. At the opening of the winter session of the legislature he had made a speech, the greater part of which was taken up with comments on the proposition that "all men are created equal." The "other preacher of *égalité*," the Duke of Orleans, had lately perished under the guillotine.

"4 February, 1794.

"I hope my old friend will never meet the fate of another preacher of *égalité*, who was, I fear, almost as sincere as himself. By the law of nature, all men are men, and not angels — men, and not lions — men, and not whales — men, and not eagles — that is, they are all of the same species; and this is the most that the equality of nature amounts to. But man differs by nature from man, almost as much as man from beast. The equality of nature is moral and political only, and means that all men are independent. But a physical inequality, an intellectual inequality, of the most serious kind, is established unchangeably by the Author of nature; and society has a right to establish any other inequalities it may judge necessary for its good. The precept, however, *do as you would be done by*, implies an equality which is the real equality of nature and Christianity, and has been known and understood in all ages, before the Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts made the discovery in January, 1794.

"I am pleased to hear that the court appointed again their late State attorney. Mr. Dalton called on me, a few weeks ago,

to communicate to me a great secret. The President had the evening before taken him aside, and inquired of him very particularly concerning the Vice-President's son at Boston, his age, his practice, his character, &c., &c., at the same time making great inquiries concerning Mr. Parsons, of Newburyport. From all which Mr. D. conjectured that Mr. Gore was to be appointed attorney-general of the United States, and J. Q. Adams, attorney for the district. I was somewhat alarmed, and was determined to advise my son to refuse it, if it should be so, though I did not believe it. I would not advise Mr. J. Q. A. to play at small games in the executive of the United States. I had much rather he should be State attorney for Suffolk. Let him read Cicero and Demosthenes — much more eloquent than Madison and Smith.

"The rascally lie about the Duke of York in a cage at Paris, and Toulon and all the English fleet in the hands of the republic, was fabricated on purpose to gull the gudgeons; and it completely succeeded, to my infinite mortification. An attempt was made to get me to read the red-hot lie in senate, in order to throw them into as foolish a confusion as that below them;[1] but I was too old to be taken in, at least by so gross an artifice, the falsehood of which was to me palpable.

"You apologize for the length of your letters, and I ought to excuse the shortness and emptiness of mine. Yours give me more entertainment than all the speeches I hear. There are more good thoughts, fine strokes, and mother wit in them than I hear in the whole week. An ounce of mother wit is worth a pound of clergy; and I rejoice that one of my children, at least, has an abundance of not only mother wit, but his mother's wit. It is one of the most amiable and striking traits in his composition. It appeared in all its glory and severity in 'Barneveldt.'[2]

"If the rogue has any family pride, it is all derived from the same source. His Pa renounces and abjures every trace of it. He has curiosity to know his descent, and comfort in the knowledge that his ancestors, on both sides, for several generations, have been innocent. But no pride in this. Pomp, splendor,

[1] All the bells of Philadelphia, on the occasion of this false report, are said, in the newspaper language of the day, to have "reëchoed the glorious sound of *downfall of tyrants — the rights of man forever.*"

[2] A signature attached to some articles printed in a Boston newspaper.

office, title, power, riches, are the sources of pride, but even these are not excuse for pride. The virtues and talents of ancestors should be considered as examples and solemn trusts, and produce meekness, modesty, and humility, lest they should not be imitated and equalled. Mortification and humiliation can be the only legitimate feelings of a mind conscious that it falls short of its ancestors in merit. I must stop."

It may be interesting to some to know how this intelligence was received by the person to whom it was addressed. Her letter, in reply, will show. She proved to be right in her conjecture. The prince alluded to was the person afterwards Duke of Kent, and the father of the present Queen of England.

"Quincy, February, 1794.

"You say so many handsome things to me, respecting my letters, that you ought to fear making me vain; since, however we may appreciate the encomiums of the world, the praises of those whom we love and esteem are more dangerous, because we are led to believe them the most sincere.

"When I read in your letter the communication made you by Mr. Dalton, I drew a very different conclusion from it from what he did. I believe the President had some hint of the writer of certain pieces, and was led to make those inquiries respecting the master and the pupil, that he might the better judge whether the pupil alone was capable of writing them. I am much better pleased that this should have been his object, than that the appointment Mr. D. suggested should have taken place. If I have pride and ambition, it would not have been gratified by that; for instead of benefiting or advancing our son, it would have created envy, and injured him in his present prospect of increasing business. It would have been a feather whose point would have proved a sting. He has acquired to himself by his writings, his abilities, and his general character for information, a reputation which his enemies fear, and which cannot be combated by any imputation upon his life and manners.

. . . . . .

"Prince Edward sailed last Sunday. He sent his aids to visit the Lieutenant-Governor, but would not go himself. He dined with Mrs. Hancock, and was visited by many gentlemen

in town. He went to the assembly with Mr. Russell, and danced with Mrs. Russell. He went to visit the college, but I did not hear that he had any curiosity to see Bunker Hill. He related an anecdote at the table of the English consul. As he was coming from Quebec, he stopped at an inn, where an elderly countryman desired to see him. After some bowing, &c., the countryman said: 'I hear you are King George's son.' 'They tell me so,' said the prince. 'And, pray, how do you like this country?' 'Why, very well,' replied his highness. 'And how do you think your father liked to lose it?' 'Why, not half so well as I should like to live in it,' replied the prince, which answer pleased the countryman. I hear he took notice of all the French refugees, and offered any of them a passage with him to the West Indies. His stay here was very short; and it was best it should be so."

In the following extracts, Mr. Adams gives some idea of the movements of the time: —

"8 February, 1794.

"Congress have been together more than two months, and have done nothing; and will continue sitting two months longer, and do little. I, for my part, am wearied to death with *ennui*. Obliged to be punctual by my habits, confined to my seat, as in a prison, to see nothing done, hear nothing said, and to say and do nothing. O, that my rocks were here within a mile or two, and my little habitation, and pretty little wife above all. Ah, I fear that some fault unknown has brought upon me such punishments, to be separated both when we were too young and when we are too old.

"I don't believe we shall adopt Mr. Madison's motions,[1] or build a navy. But if we do not purchase a peace with the Algerines, we shall all deserve to become their captives.

"The Genetians had a frolic on the 6th, in commemoration of the treaty,[2] and drank toasts enough to get merry. So cordial, so loving, so fraternal, so neat and elegant, so sweet and pretty! Have you read them? Franklin, Bryan, Reed, Hutchinson, and Sergeant, the heroes. Fit company for Dallas, Mifflin,

[1] They had been postponed, on the 5th, by a vote of 51 to 47, regarded as a test of the sense of the House.

[2] The alliance with France, 6 February, 1778.

and Genet! No harm done, however, that I hear of. A sharp shot or two at the President.

"The havoc made in our trade, I fear, will distress us. I suspect that immense sums borrowed of banks have fallen a sacrifice in France, as well as on the seas; and when the day of payment comes, more credits must be given, or bankruptcies ensue. Borrowing of banks for a trading capital is very unmercantile. However, we shall not go to war, and nothing is to be dreaded so much as that.

"I fear the English will have all the West Indies, leaving a little to Spain. This I don't like at all. We shall see what another campaign will do in Europe. If the English assist la Vendée, which, if they had been cunning or wise, they would have done last year, it is thought that Brittany, Normandy, and Picardy will declare for a king. But of this there can be no certainty."

"9 February.

"So the tables are turned on the French faction; and the English faction will exult, in their turn, in the prospect of the West India Islands a conquest to England, the French navy wholly ruined, and insurrection spreading from province to province. Alas! I see no cause of joy in all these exultations on either side. I am compelled to console myself as well as I can.

Horace Ode 24

"'Durum! sed levius fit patientiâ
Quicquid corrigere est nefas.'

"'Est aliquis et dolendi decor. Hic sapienti servandus est. Et quemadmodum in ceteris rebus, ita et in lacrimis aliquid sat est. Imprudentium ut gaudia, sic dolores exundavere. Æquo animo excipe necessaria.'

Seneca Epistle 99.

"Don't be impatient for the meaning of these mysteries. Wait till John comes up to translate them.

"Indeed, and in truth, I see no consolation upon these occasions but in stoicism or Christianity. I am no more delighted with the idea of the West Indies in the hands of the English, than I was with Brabant and Flanders in the power of Dumouriez."

"23 February.

"The birthday was celebrated yesterday with as much joy, affection, and festivity as ever; and, as it happened, the new

French minister was then presented. Poor Genet, I fear, is undone. Bad as his conduct has been, I cannot but pity him. What will become of him, I know not. The name of his successor is Fauchet. Gloomy as I was, in expectation daily of afflicting news from home, I contented myself with paying my respects to the President, with the senate; but I thought it would not become me to be present at the ball, of a Saturday night, especially at a time when I could not get it out of my thoughts that my venerable parent[1] might be closing her eyes forever.

"The senate has been several days trying a contested election of Mr. Gallatin, with their doors open. It is, at length, determined that a gallery is to be built, and our debates public at the next session of congress. What the effect of this measure, which was at last carried by a great majority, will be, I know not; but it cannot produce greater evils than the contest about it, which was made an engine to render unpopular some of the ablest and most independent members. Some of the younger members may descend from their dignity so far, perhaps, as to court popularity at the expense of justice, truth, and wisdom, by flattering the prejudices of the audience, but I think they will lose more esteem than they will acquire by such means."

The question which the writer decided, as mentioned in the next extract, is the one heretofore alluded to, upon the bill to prevent violations of neutrality.

"12 March.

"I have all along flattered myself with hopes that I might with propriety have taken leave of the senate, and returned home as soon as the roads might be settled; but such is the critical state of our public affairs, and I daily hear such doctrines advanced and supported by almost and sometimes quite one half of the senate, that I shall not prevail on myself to abandon my post. This day, the senators were equally divided upon a question which seemed to me to involve nothing less than peace and war; and I was obliged to decide it, to the no small chagrin of a number. If this country is involved in war, it shall not be by my fault. But if it comes either from the malice of our enemies or the imprudence of our own people, it may perhaps

[1] Mr. Adams's mother was still living at a very advanced age.

be found that I shall not shrink from its difficulties sooner than some who now seek it in disguise. Business is now carried on with rapidity in both Houses, and I shall have a month of severe duty. I have not been absent a day. It is, to be sure, a punishment to hear other men talk five hours every day, and not be at liberty to talk at all myself, especially as more than half I hear appears to me very young, inconsiderate, and inexperienced."

The President *pro tempore*, spoken of in the next letter, was John Langdon, of New Hampshire, who soon after this time went into open opposition.

"15 March.

"I know not how to throw off the lassitude that hangs upon me. Weary of a daily round, which to me is more confined and more insipid than to any other, I would gladly go home; but at a time so critical as this, it would not be justifiable to quit my post, if there were no particular reasons against it. But as the senate is nearly divided in all great questions, and the President *pro tem.* has lately taken it in his head to shift his box, my retirement would give an entire new complexion to the government. This circumstance, however, must not be repeated from me; but it is true.

"Great pains have been, and still are, taken to inflame the populace of Philadelphia and New York; and they have no method to correct this but by a town meeting, and by the temperate reasonings of the soundest part of the community, as they have at Boston; the consequence of which is that club meets to counteract club, merchants to undo what merchants have done, and the public opinion is a chaos, a Proteus — any thing, every thing, and nothing. Yet all sides trumpet and dogmatize about the public opinion.

"If the New England people suffer themselves to be artfully drawn into a war, they will be dupes indeed; for all the men and most of the money must be forced from them; and while others will throw off the burden of British debts, and obtain all the advantages of fur and peltry trades, and western lands, we have not the smallest thing to hope, unless it be by privateering; and such is now the tremendous naval superiority against us that we shall lose more than we gain by that.

. . . . . .

"Raynal prayed that, rather than men should always be knaves and fools, the species might be annihilated. At present, it seems in a fair way to be so. I love them too well, with all their faults, to be glad to see their present rapid progress towards destruction. All that I have and all that I am would I cheerfully give to prevent it. But I see no means. Havoc must have its perfect work, and then eyes will begin to open."

"Senate Chamber, 27 March.

"Yesterday an embargo passed both Houses, for thirty days. I am afraid congress will sit late in May. I cannot think of leaving it in so critical a moment.

"I have one comfort; that in thought, word, or deed I have never encouraged a war. I will persevere in doing all in my power to prevent it. If it is forced on us by England, or even if it is brought on us by our own imprudence, I must stand or fall with my country.

"If the French had a better government and better morals, I should feel easier."

The violent measure spoken of in the next extract was the motion of Mr. Dayton, as found in the journal of the House for that day:—

"1 April.

"The people here are much cooler than they were last week. The embargo begins to be felt by many who have been the most noisy and turbulent. Speculation mingles itself in every political operation, and many merchants have already made a noble *spec.* of the embargo by raising their prices. But the foolish tradesmen and laborers, who were so ready to follow the heels of their scheming leaders, are now out of employment, and will lose thirty dollars a head by this embargo. If they had been taxed half the sum to the most necessary and important measure, they would have bitterly complained. I can see little benefit in the embargo, except that it may cool down the courage of such kind of people. It may be expected that we shall soon have a clamor against the renewal of it, if not to have it repealed.

"The assembly of Pennsylvania have this day chosen a

senator, Mr. James Ross, of Washington county, in the place of Mr. Gallatin.

"A violent measure has been proposed in the House, to sequester all debts due from American citizens to British subjects. Such a motion will do no honor to our country. Such laws are injurious to the debtor as well as the creditor, for they cannot dissolve the contracts. It will not pass the House, and, if it did, it would stop in the Senate.

"We are rejoiced that the civic feast in Boston succeeded no better. It is astonishing that Mr. A. should ever have thought of implicating the government in so indecent and hostile a frolic.[1] We have had an incessant struggle all the winter to restrain the intemperate ardor of the people out of doors and their too accurate representatives in both Houses. Too many of our good federalists are carried away at times by their passions and the popular torrent, to concur in motions and countenance sentiments inconsistent with our neutrality, and tending directly to war. But I hope we shall be able to make a stand against all fatal attempts.

"I long to be at home, but I dare not ask leave to go. The times are too critical for any man to quit his post without the most urgent necessity."

"7 April.

"We are still endeavoring to preserve peace. But one moves a series of commercial regulations; another, a sequestration of debts; a third, to prohibit all intercourse with Britain; a fourth, to issue letters of marque against Algerines; all tending to excite suspicions in Britain that we are hostile to her, and mean ultimately to join her enemies. One firebrand is scarcely quenched before another is thrown in; and if the sound part of the community is not uncommonly active and attentive to support us, we shall be drawn off from our neutral ground, and involved in incomprehensible evils. In danger of a war that will be unnecessary, if not unjust; that has no public object in view; that must be carried on with allies the most dangerous

[1] This was a festival proposed to be held in Boston "to celebrate the successes of our French allies." The acting governor, Samuel Adams, upon being applied to, consented to call out some military corps to assist upon the occasion. But the citizens generally proved so lukewarm that the committee appointed to prepare it suspended their operations, assigning as a reason "the uncertainty of our political situation and the distresses of our trade."

that ever existed, my situation is as disagreeable as any I ever knew. I should have no fear of an honest war; but a knavish one would fill me with disgust and abhorrence."

In the succeeding letter, the writer comments upon Mr. Clark's resolution to prohibit intercourse with Great Britain, which was afterwards rejected by his casting vote.

"15 April.

"The House yesterday passed a resolution in committee of the whole, whose depth is to me unfathomable. The Senate will now be called upon to show their independence; and, perhaps, your friend to show his weakness or his strength. The majority of the House is certainly for mischief, and there is no doubt they represent the people in the Southern States and a large number in the Northern. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, they say, and so it is, sometimes. But it is sometimes the voice of Mahomet, of Cæsar, of Catiline, the Pope, and the Devil. Britain, however, has done much amiss, and deserves all that will fall thereon. Her insolence, which you and I have known and felt more than any other Americans, will lead her to ruin, and us half-way. We indeed are, in point of insolence, her very image and superscription; as true a game-cock as she, and I warrant you, shall become as great a scourge to mankind."

If Mr. Adams is correct in assigning the motive for the opposition to Mr. Jay, it is only adding one more to the large number of instances on record of political miscalculations. It can scarcely admit of a doubt that the treaty, which was the issue of his mission, roused an opposition which deterred the federalists from thinking of him as a candidate for the Presidency.

"19 April.

"Senate has been three days in debate upon the appointment of Mr. Jay to go to London. It has this day been determined in his favor, eighteen *versus* eight.

"You cannot imagine what horror some persons are in, lest peace should continue. The prospect of peace throws them into distress. Their countenances lengthen at the least opening of an appearance of it. Glancing gleams of joy beam from their faces whenever all possibility of it seems to be cut off.

You can divine the secret source of these feelings as well as I. The opposition to Mr. Jay has been quickened by motives which will always influence every thing in an elective government. Pretexts are never wanting to ingenious men; but the views of all the principal parties are always directed to the election of the first magistrate. If Jay should succeed, it will recommend him to the choice of the people for President, as soon as a vacancy shall happen. This will weaken the hopes of the Southern States for Jefferson. This I believe to be the secret motive of the opposition to him, though other things were alleged as ostensible reasons; such as his monarchical principles, his indifference about the navigation of the Mississippi, his attachment to England, his aversion to France, none of which are well founded; and his holding the office of chief justice, &c.

"The day is a good omen. May the gentle zephyrs waft him to his destination, and the blessing of Heaven succeed his virtuous endeavors to preserve peace. I am so well satisfied with this measure that I shall run the venture to ask leave to go home, if congress determines to sit beyond the middle of May.

. . . . . .

"We are ill-treated by Britain, and you and I know it is owing to a national insolence against us. If they force us into a war, it is my firm faith they will be chastised for it a second time worse than the first."

"22 April.

"The President has appointed Mr. Jay to go to England as envoy extraordinary, in hopes that satisfaction may be obtained for the injuries done us in the capture of our vessels. I have no very sanguine hopes of his success, but if any man can succeed, I presume he is as likely as any. At least, he will give as much satisfaction to the American people as any man."

"5 May.

"I must remain here, because my friends say I must not go. Those whose principles are the same with mine, whose views of public good coincide with mine, say that if we keep together, we shall succeed to the end of the session as we have hitherto done, in keeping off all the most pernicious projects.

"The ways and means before the House of Representatives is a very important and a very difficult system. While I confess the necessity of it, and see its importance in giving strength to our government at home and consideration to our country abroad, I lament the introduction of taxes and expenses which will accumulate a perpetual debt and lead to future revolutions.

"Mr. Jay is to immortalize himself over again by keeping peace. This will depend on the valor of the French. I begin to rejoice in their successes more than I did. The English have treated us very ill.

"We must send a new minister to France, and another to Holland. Mr. Fauchet begins to grace our democratic societies with his presence. This must not be carried very far. These assemblies are very criminal.

"O, that I were with you!"

"10 May.

"We go on as usual, congress resolving one thing, and the democratical societies resolving the contrary; the President doing what is right, and clubs and mobs resolving it to be all wrong.

"We had in Senate, a few days ago, the greatest curiosity of all. The senators from Virginia moved, in consequence of an instruction from their constituents, that the execution of the fourth article of the treaty of peace, relative to *bonâ fide* debts, should be suspended until Britain should fulfil the seventh article. When the question was put, fourteen voted against it, two only, the Virginia delegates, for it; and all the rest, but one, ran out of the room to avoid voting at all. And that one excused himself.[1] This is the first instance of the kind.

"The motion disclosed the real object of all the wild projects and mad motions which have been made during the whole session. O, liberty! O, my country! O, debt! And, O, sin! These debtors are the persons who are continually declaiming against the corruption of congress. Impudence! Thy front is brass."

[1] Yeas, 2. Messrs. Monroe and Taylor.
Nays, 14. Messrs. Bradford, Cabot, Ellsworth, Foster, Frelinghuysen, Henry, Izard, King, Langdon, Livermore, Morris, Potts, Ross, and Strong.
Messrs. Hawkins, Jackson, and Martin, appear to have been three of the persons who set the precedent, which has been often followed since, and by more distinguished public men. The usual attendance was about twenty-four.

It is interesting to note the comment upon the introduction of the practice of voting with printed ballots, which has since become universal. The effect of it, in increasing the force of associated action, and diminishing the individual power of choice between candidates, has never yet been sufficiently set forth.

"17 May.

"Well! Boston comes on. Mr. Morton is now to be its leader. How changed in reputation since 1788! I wonder not at the choice of well-born Winthrop. He might, I suppose, have been chosen at any time. His father was one of my best friends, and the son was a good son of liberty. I know of nothing to his disadvantage. The federalists committed an egregious blunder in a very unwarrantable and indecent attempt, I had almost said, upon the freedom of elections, at their previous meeting for the choice of governor. The opposite party, to be sure, practise arts nearly as unwarrantable in secret, and by sending agents with printed votes. But this is no justification, unless upon Cato's principle: *In corruptâ civitate corruptio est licita.*"

A younger brother of Mr. Adams had been chosen at this election to represent the town of Quincy in the State legislature. In announcing it, Mrs. Adams had expressed to her husband her apprehension that he was too much inclined to hostilities with Great Britain. The following comment contains the writer's system in few words: —

"19 May.

"My brother will not vote for war, I hope, before it is necessary as well as just. Great is the guilt of unnecessary war!

"I have not a doubt but the farm has been well governed. I wish the State and the nation may be as well conducted.

"The world is a riddle, which death, I hope, will unravel. Amidst all the trials I have gone through, I have much to be grateful for: good parents, an excellent wife, and promising children; tolerable health, upon the whole, and competent fortune; success almost without example in a dangerous, dreadful revolution, and still hopes of better times."

This important session of congress expired, as has been seen,

without any marked proceeding. But the extent to which the sympathies of men had become enlisted on one side or the other of the great struggle going on in Europe can scarcely be understood at this day without a familiar acquaintance with the newspapers of the time. The violent discussions that had been held, and the close divisions upon all disputed questions that followed, make a significant prelude to the furious storm that raged during the remainder of the second administration.

Previously to entering upon this, however, it may be as well to close the correspondence of the season with the following letter communicating a most interesting fact to both the parties; the entrance of their son, John Quincy Adams, upon his diplomatic career. The Secretary of State alluded to was Edmund Randolph, who had succeeded to Mr. Jefferson at the beginning of the session.

"27 May.

"It is proper that I should apprise you, that the President has it in contemplation to send your son to Holland, that you may recollect yourself and prepare for the event. I make this communication to you, in confidence, at the desire of the President communicated to me yesterday by the Secretary of State. You must keep it an entire secret, until it shall be announced to the public in the journal of the Senate. But our son must hold himself in readiness to come to Philadelphia to converse with the President, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, &c., and receive his commissions and instructions, without loss of time. He will go to Providence in the stage, and thence to New York by water, and thence to Philadelphia in the stage. He will not set out, however, until he is informed of his appointment. Perhaps the Senate may negative him, and then his journey will be unnecessary."

The nomination was made two days after the date of this letter, and was confirmed by the Senate on the 30th. Ten days later that body dispersed.

Since the hour that the scales turned in favor of independence in Pennsylvania, that State has exerted a commanding influence over the internal politics of the United States. The manner in which that event was brought about, threw her into connections with New England, which continued, with slight in-

terruptions, down to the year 1794. At both of the elections, which had occurred since the organization of the new government, her electoral votes had been given in favor of Massachusetts, in the only case where there was a division, in marked contrast to the policy of New York; and the general character of her representation in both houses of congress had been friendly to the same power in the federal administration. But the causes which produced this state of things had been gradually wearing away, and others had been at work in the western section of the State, which heralded the change of policy that in time became decided. One great instrument to alienate the popular feeling was found in the law passed in 1791, laying a duty upon spirits distilled within the United States, which stimulated the discontent at once of the consumers and of those who found a market for their superfluous grain in the manufacture.

This law was one of the serious mistakes of the federal party. For the trifling revenue obtained from it, proved by no means an equivalent for the irritation that, in the unsettled state of public affairs at the outset of a new government, ensued. Here is to be traced the rise of another individual, Albert Gallatin, not inferior to Hamilton in the powers of his mind, and much his superior in the shrewdness and discretion which he brought to the management of great public concerns. Excluded from the Senate by a constitutional obstacle, he had nevertheless succeeded in organizing the opposition of the western counties to such an extent as to render him a powerful coadjutor in the policy of which Mr. Jefferson had become the type. The zeal of the people in that region, however, so far outran their discretion, that they broke out this summer into open resistance to the authority of government. The civil officers were set at defiance, and had to fly for their lives. And the duty devolved upon the President of maintaining the supremacy of the federal law by an armed force. Of this force, Mr. Hamilton took the direction without having the nominal command. The mere appearance of it was sufficient to restore order, as none of the leading men in that quarter had entertained any intention of pushing matters to extremity. But the hostility to Mr. Hamilton, as a member of the cabinet, had become so bitter in a large section of the Union, and his remaining in it,

after Jefferson's retirement, had been construed as giving so decided a party complexion to the administration, that he deemed it best likewise to withdraw. The next session of congress began in November, with important changes to the country. Few of the elder class of public men could be found willing to breast the fury of the political elements. President Washington was obliged to select Oliver Wolcott, of Connecticut, whom Mr. Hamilton probably pointed out to him, as the next secretary of the treasury, and Timothy Pickering, of Massachusetts, to succeed General Knox, who insisted upon retirement from the war department. Both these appointments were from New England, where the government was already sufficiently strong. Neither of them gave any reinforcement to the popularity of the administration,[1] which from this time rested upon the name and character of the President alone. Fortunate was it for the country that in the ordeal which ensued, such a support was reserved to carry it through in safety. For the events that occurred were of a nature to task even that strength to the utmost.

The short session of 1794–1795 passed away in a state of comparative calm. Although the opposition yet held a majority in the House of Representatives, its force had been weakened by the events of the summer, and both parties were willing, before engaging in a new trial of strength, to await the result of the negotiations which Mr. Jay was understood to be conducting with the British ministry. Only three days after the close of the session, the cabinet received the intelligence that the terms of a treaty had been agreed upon, and accordingly the President directed the Senate to be especially convoked in June for the purpose of passing upon its ratification. Mr. Adams's letters during this session are short, and being necessarily restrained by the obligation to secrecy, are very meagre. Yet they contain some hints.

"9 June, 1795.

"The Senate assembled yesterday, at eleven; twenty-five members present. The new Senators were sworn, and a committee waited on the President, who immediately sent a message with the treaty, which was read, together with a part of a vol-

[1] This is conceded by Mr. Gibbs as it respects Wolcott. It is even more true of Pickering. *Administrations of Washington and Adams*, vol. i. p. 175.

ume of negotiations which accompanied it. Mr. Butler and Mr. Green arrived last night, as I hear, so that we shall be very full.

"Your curiosity, I doubt not, is all alive. But — mum — mum — mum."

Mrs. Adams was at this time in New York. In the evening of the same day he wrote again, transmitting the pamphlet then just issued by Cobbett, called "A Bone to gnaw for the Democrats."

"The Senate are now in possession of the budget. It is a bone to gnaw for the aristocrats as well as the democrats; and while I am employed in attending the digestion of it, I send you inclosed an amusement which resembles it only in name. I can form no judgment when the process will be over. We must wait with patience.

"Be very careful, my dearest friend, of what you say in that circle and city. The times are perilous."

The writer lived almost to the time to witness the feasibility of what he in the next letter manifestly regards as a very wild wish.

"11 June.

"If I could take a walk or a ride to New York in the evening and come here again in the morning, how clever it would be!

"Mr. Jay spent last evening with me, and let me into the history of the treaty and negotiation, explaining his views of its intent and operation. I can say nothing upon it at present.

"I have read eight of Mr. A.'s dispatches; and fourteen remain to be read. Government is much pleased with them.

"My love to all. When I shall get away from this city, is uncertain. But I have no hopes of being excused before the end of next week. The treaty is of great extent and importance, and will not be rejected nor adopted without a thorough examination. I presume every member will wish for such an investigation as will enable him to render a reason for his vote, whether *pro* or *con*."

During the absence of Mr. Jay, in England, he had been elected governor of the State of New York.

"18 June.

"Mr. Adet was presented to the President on Tuesday, and, accompanied by the Secretary of State, made me a visit immediately after his audience. I was not at home, but in Senate. On Wednesday morning I returned his visit at Oeller's hotel.

"He is not a friend to clubs — announced to the President the entire *annihilation of factions* in France, &c.

"His Excellency, Governor Jay, returned yesterday to New York. He has been very sociable and in fine spirits. His health is improving. We have no chief justice as yet nominated. It is happy that Mr. Jay's election was over before the treaty was published; for the parties against him would have quarrelled with the treaty, right or wrong, that they might give a color to their animosity against him."

"20 June.

"All the next week will be taken up, I suppose, in further investigations of the subject before Senate, and, indeed, I should be very glad to be insured that the decision will be as early as Saturday. If it should be earlier, I shall be agreeably disappointed. I shall take my departure as soon as the business is done.

"The day is at hand, when Governor Jay is to take the reins in New York. May his administration be easy to himself and happy for the people!"

The next letter contains an omen of the serious differences that occurred a few years later. Lansdown was the name of Mr.* Robert Morris's country seat near Philadelphia.

"21 June.

"The sun is so bright and augurs such heat that I am doubtful whether I shall go out to Lansdown to dinner.

"I dined yesterday at Mr. Wolcott's, the Secretary of the Treasury, with King, Ellsworth, and Cabot, and a few others. The conversation turned upon old times. One of the company expressed such inveteracy against my old friend Gerry, that I could not help taking up his vindication. The future election of a governor, in case of an empty chair, excites a jealousy which I have long perceived. These things will always be so. Gerry's merit is inferior to that of no man in the Massachusetts, except the present governor, according to my ideas and judg-

* Mistake. The place belonged to William Bingham.

See Griswold. Republican Court p 262

ment of merit. I wish he was more enlarged, however, and more correct in his views. He never was one of the threads tied into the Essex knot, and was never popular with that set."

"23 June.

"Some senators are confident we shall rise to-morrow or next day. If so, I shall be with you on Sunday. But these conjectures are always uncertain.

"Both the public dispatches and private letters of our dear boys are the delight of all who read them. No public minister has ever given greater satisfaction, than Mr. Adams[1] has hitherto. His prudence, caution, and penetration are as much approved as the elegance of his style is admired. Providence, I hope and pray, will make him a blessing to his country as well as to his parents.

"I went out to Lansdown on Sunday, about half a mile on this side Judge Peters's, where you once dined. The place is very retired, but very beautiful — a splendid house, gravel walks, shrubberies and clumps of trees in the English style — on the bank of the Schuylkill."

Mrs. Adams, whilst at New York, had been to see General Gates, and had written an account of his farming, in the vicinity of that place.

"24 June.

"The Senate advanced yesterday in their deliberations with so much diligence that it would be very easy to finish to-day; but it is not probable to me that they will. Whether to-morrow or next day, or the day after, I cannot determine.

"It would give me great pleasure to visit General Gates, and make my observations on his husbandry and gardening. I should hope to learn lessons and acquire experience in my favorite business and amusement, but the time will not permit. My affairs at home demand my immediate attention.

"I dine to-day with Colonel Pickering, and to-morrow with the President. But if the Senate finishes to-day, I will make my apology."

"26 June.

"The Senate is to meet at ten this morning, and I hope will

[1] His son, J. Q. Adams.

finish; but it is still uncertain. I shall set out this afternoon, provided the Senate rises.

"I shall say nothing of public affairs, because the least said is soonest mended."

The treaty barely received the necessary sanction of two thirds of the Senate. It certainly cannot be ranked as a triumph of American diplomacy, but it was a great deal better than war, which must have ensued without it. The enemies of the administration, avoiding the responsibility of rejecting it, now flamed out in earnest opposition. One of the senators from Virginia, violating his obligation of secrecy, communicated a copy of the instrument to a newspaper at Philadelphia, the effect of which was to precipitate a burst of indignation upon it from one end of the country to the other. The first manifestation occurred in Boston, where, in a crowded assembly in Faneuil Hall, but a single individual ventured to interpose a word of objection to the universal cry of condemnation. The same spirit was manifested in all the chief towns of the seaboard, and undoubtedly animated the population everywhere. As is not uncommon, however, the very excess to which it was carried on the instant, led to a reaction in time. Some hopes were entertained that the President might yet be induced, by earnest remonstrances, to withhold his signature. His answer to the people of Boston set that matter at rest. No more enduring memorial of a statesman's firmness is to be found in history. The effect of it was to rally around him all the leading friends of government, and to make the issue of the contest that raged during the subsequent session of congress far more doubtful than could have been possibly anticipated.

Neither the British nor the French government remained indifferent spectators of this warfare. The latter complained of the treaty not without show of reason, because it conceded in favor of her adversary, a departure from the principles which had been agreed on between the two nations in the treaty of 1778, when the sanction of France was all-important to their establishment. This objection might have been decisive, but for the opportune exposure through the agency of Mr. Hammond, the British minister, of a secret correspondence between M. Fauchet, the envoy of France, and Mr. Edmund Randolph, the

Secretary of State, which seriously implicated the integrity of the latter. The precise extent of his misconduct has never been defined. He failed in his attempt to explain it. And the consequence was a rise in the popular feeling adverse to France, which was materially quickened by the intelligence now pouring in from Europe of the revolutionary excesses. Randolph was driven to a resignation. In this hour of distress, Washington looked over the wide surface of the land for efficient support. One after another of the best and strongest men was summoned to fill the vacant post. Not one of them had the courage to come. Under these circumstances, he was compelled to continue Colonel Timothy Pickering in the office, to which he had, in the beginning, transferred him only for the moment. The acceptance of the place, when everybody else shrunk from it, was creditable to the manliness of Colonel Pickering, though the event proved big with the fate of the administration that was to follow.

A memoir of this kind cannot, without exceeding all reasonable limits, be expected to enter minutely into the history of the period, however interesting it may be. It must necessarily confine itself to those portions of it calculated to illustrate the life and character, the private feelings and the public action of the person to whom it relates. Thus far, the troubles of the times had not pressed heavily upon the mind of Mr. Adams, because his situation, excepting upon rare occasions, dictated inactivity, whilst it favored the preservation of a serenity highly propitious to his powers of observation. It is this which gives so much zest to the familiar correspondence with his wife, from which extracts have been freely given. They will now be continued down to the moment when these feelings begin to change. The first symptom of this is to be traced in the operation of the disturbed state of affairs upon the mind of the President. Deserted by the leading men of his own section of country, and by others to whom he had a right to look for assistance, and compelled thus alone to breast the fury of an opposition growing more and more bitter towards himself, he grew more resolved upon positive retirement. The rumors of his design, which now got abroad, affected different interests very differently. The federalists regarded it with dismay; the opposition with faintly disguised satisfaction. The position of

Mr. Adams was necessarily to be greatly affected by the event. Here his own speculations come in to describe it much better than any substitute could do.

"7 January, 1796.

"The President appears great in Randolph's vindication throughout, excepting that he wavered about signing the treaty, which he ought not to have done one moment. Happy is the country to be rid of Randolph; but where shall be found good men and true to fill the offices of government? There seems to be a necessity of distributing the offices about the States in some proportion to their numbers; but in the southern part of the Union, false politics have struck their roots so deep, that it is very difficult to find gentlemen who are willing to accept of public trusts, and at the same time capable of discharging them. The President offered the office of State to several gentlemen who declined; to Mr. Patterson, Mr. King, Mr. Henry, of Virginia, Mr. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, of South Carolina, and three others whose names I do not recollect. He has not been able to find any one to accept the war office. The expenses of living at the seat of government are so exorbitant, so far beyond all proportion to the salaries, and the sure reward of integrity in the discharge of public functions is such obloquy, contempt, and insult, that no man of any feeling is willing to renounce his home, forsake his property and profession for the sake of removing to Philadelphia, where he is almost sure of disgrace and ruin.

"Where these things will end, I know not. In perfect secrecy between you and me, I must tell you that now I believe the President will retire. The consequence to me is very serious, and I am not able, as yet, to see what my duty will demand of me. I shall take my resolutions with cool deliberation. I shall watch the course of events with more critical attention than I have done for some time, and what Providence shall point out to be my duty, I shall pursue with patience and decision. It is no light thing to resolve upon retirement. My country has claims, my children have claims, and my own character has claims upon me; but all these claims forbid me to serve the public in disgrace. Whatever any one may think, I love my country too well to shrink from danger in her service, provided I have a reasonable prospect of being able to serve her to her

honor and advantage. But if I have reason to think that I have either a want of abilities or of public confidence to such a degree as to be unable to support the government in a higher station, I ought to decline it. But in that case, I ought not to serve in my present place under another, especially if that other should entertain sentiments so opposite to mine as to endanger the peace of the nation. It will be a dangerous crisis in public affairs, if the President and Vice-President should be in opposite boxes.

"These lucubrations must be confined to your own bosom. But I think, upon the whole, the probability is strong that I shall make a voluntary retreat, and spend the rest of my days, in a very humble style, with you. Of one thing I am very sure — it would be to me the happiest portion of my whole life."

Parties were now very distinctly defined, and the great theatre of contention was the House of Representatives.

The first struggle took place upon an absolute demand upon the President for the papers connected with the negotiation of Jay's treaty. Here the opposition triumphed, and the President was driven to refuse them, in order to maintain the independence of the executive authority. The next contest was upon the measures necessary to carry the treaty into execution, and in that the administration finally prevailed. This is the occasion upon which Mr. Ames's speech earned him a reputation as an orator, which has survived his generation. The whole session was absorbed in these proceedings.

"20 January, 1796.

"This is one of my red-letter days. It is the anniversary of the signature of the declaration of an armistice between the United States and Great Britain, in 1783. There are several of these days in my calendar, which I recollect as they pass in review, but which nobody else remembers. And, indeed, it is no otherwise worth my while to remember them than to render an ejaculation of gratitude to Providence for the blessing.

"We are wasting our time in the most insipid manner, waiting for the treaty. Nothing of any consequence will be done till that arrives, and is mauled and abused, and then acquiesced in. For the anti's must be more numerous than I believe them, and made of sterner stuff than I conceive, if they dare

hazard the surrender of the posts and the payment for spoliations, by any resolution of the House that shall render precarious the execution of the treaty on our part.

"I am, as you say, quite a favorite. I am to dine to-day again. I am heir apparent, you know, and a succession is soon to take place. But whatever may be the wish or the judgment of the present occupant, the French and the demagogues intend, I presume, to set aside the descent. All these hints must be secrets. It is not a subject of conversation as yet. I have a pious and a philosophical resignation to the voice of the people in this case, which is the voice of God. I have no very ardent desire to be the butt of party malevolence. Having tasted of that cup, I find it bitter, nauseous, and unwholesome."

In no single particular has a greater change taken place in the political affairs of the United States than in the mode in which public questions are discussed. During the period now under consideration, the highest class of ability in the country was habitually enlisted in the production of elaborate dissertations for the newspapers upon the great topics of the day. These were commonly printed at all the central points, and being assiduously read by the people, exercised a strong influence upon their modes of thought and action. It may admit of question whether, with the enormous multiplication of local presses, established on a different plan, and the change of tastes and feelings that has happened, so useful a mode of keeping the public mind impressed with principles of importance has been preserved. The thirty-eight numbers of Camillus, alluded to in the next letter, which had a great effect in ultimately establishing Mr. Jay's treaty, would scarcely find a welcome among readers grown impatient of any thing beyond the meagre summary supplied by the magnetic telegraph.

"31 January, 1796.

"I have a secret to communicate to your prudence. The defence by Camillus was written in concert between Hamilton, King, and Jay. The writings on the first ten articles of the treaty were written by Hamilton; the rest by King, till they came to the question of the constitutionality of the treaty, which was discussed by Hamilton. Jay was to have written a concluding peroration; but being always a little lazy, and perhaps

concluding, upon the whole, that it might be most politic to keep his name out of it; and perhaps finding that the work was already well done, he neglected it. This I have from King's own mouth. It is to pass, however, for Hamilton's. All three consulted together upon most, if not all the pieces.

"I read forever, and am determined to sacrifice my eyes, like John Milton, rather than give up the amusement without which I should despair.

"If I did not with you consider the universe as all one family, I would never stay another day here.

"I have read four thick octavo volumes of Tacitus, translated by Murphy, one thick volume of Homer's Iliad, translated by Cowper, besides a multitude of pamphlets and newspapers, since I have been here.

"I do not write enough. The habit of writing should not be lost as I lose it. Peter Pindar has it right:—

> "'Search we the spot which mental power contains?
> Go where man gets his living by his brains.'

"If I had got my living by my brains for seven years past, I should have had more mental power. But brains have not only been useless, but even hurtful and pernicious in my course. Mine have been idle a long time till they are rusty."

The following frank and obviously sincere expression of the writer's feelings on the subject of official forms is in amusing contrast to the charges widely spread against him by the opposite party, and connived at by Mr. Jefferson himself, of excessive attachment to them.

"1 March, 1796.

"As to the subject of yours, of the 20th, I am quite at my ease. I never felt less anxiety when any considerable change lay before me. *Aut transit aut finit.* I transmigrate or come to an end. The question is between living at Philadelphia or at Quincy, between great cares and small cares. I have looked into myself, and see no meanness nor dishonesty there. I see weakness enough, but no timidity. I have no concern on your account but for your health. A woman *can* be silent when she will.

"After all, persuasion may overcome the inclination of the

chief to retire. But if it should, it will shorten his days, I am convinced. His heart is set upon it, and the turpitude of the Jacobins touches him more nearly than he owns in words. All the studied efforts of the federalists to counterbalance abuse by compliment, do not answer the end.

"I suspect, but do not know, that Patrick Henry, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Jay, and Mr. Hamilton will all be voted for. I ask no questions, but questions are forced upon me. I have had some conversations, purposely sought, in order, as I believe, indeed, as I know, to convince me that the federalists had no thought of overleaping the succession. The only question that labors in my mind is, whether I shall retire with my file-leader. I hate to live in Philadelphia in summer, and I hate still more to relinquish my farm. I hate speeches, messages, addresses and answers, proclamations, and such affected, studied, constrained things. I hate levees and drawing-rooms. I hate to speak to a thousand people to whom I have nothing to say. Yet all this I can do. But I am too old to continue more than one, or, at most, more than two heats; and that is scarcely time enough to form, conduct, and complete any very useful system.

"Electioneering enough we shall have. The inclosed scraps will show specimens."

The following is a good specimen of the writer's humor:—

"13 March.

"I covet the harp of Amphion. What would I not give for the harp of Amphion?

"In my walks in the Cedar Grove, in Rocky Run, and on Penn's Hill, I should play upon my lyre, and the merry rocks would dance after me, and reel into walls. This would be to me a very pleasant and profitable private amusement. But there is another use I could make of my instrument in my public employment, more grateful to a benevolent heart, because more useful to mankind. In no age of the world was it more wanted.

"Amphion thus bade wild dissension cease,
And softened mortals learned the arts of peace.
Amphion taught contending kings,
From various discords, to create
The music of a well-tuned state.
Nor slack, nor strain the tender strings

Those useful touches to impart
That strike the subject's answering heart,
And the soft, silent harmony that springs
From sacred union and consent of things."

"Alas! I am not Amphion. I have been thirty years singing and whistling among my rocks, and not one would ever move without money. I have been twenty years saying, if not singing, preaching, if not playing: —

"From various discords to create
The music of a well-tuned state,
And the soft, silent harmony that springs
From sacred union and consent of things,"

but an uncomplying world will not regard my uncouth discourses. I cannot sing nor play. If I had eloquence, or humor, or irony, or satire, or the harp or lyre of Amphion, how much good could I do to the world!

"What a mortification to my vanity! What a humiliation to my self-love! The rocks in the House of Representatives will not dance to my lyre. They will not accord to 'a well-tuned state.' They will not endure 'the harmony that springs from sacred union and consent of things.' They are for breaking all the instruments but that of the thorough bass, and then blowing you deaf and dumb. There are bold and daring strides making to demolish the President, Senate, and all but the House, which, as it seems to me, must be the effect of the measures that many are urging. Be not alarmed, however. They will not carry their point. The treaty will be executed, and that by the consent of the House.

"I am going to hear Dr. Priestley. His discourses are learned, ingenious, and useful. They will be printed, and, he says, dedicated to me. Don't tell this secret, though, for no other being knows it. It will get me the character of a heretic, I fear. I presume, however, that dedicating a book to a man will not imply that he approves every thing in it.

"The weather is so fine that I long to be upon my hills. Pray, since my harp cannot build walls, how do my friends go on who are obliged to employ their elbows in that laborious work?

"I sometimes think that if I were in the House of Represen-

tatives, and could make speeches there, I could throw some light upon these things. If Mr. Jefferson should be President, I believe I must put up as a candidate for the House. But this is my vanity. I feel sometimes as if I could speechify among them; but, alas, alas, I am too old! It would soon destroy my health. I declare, however, if I were in that House, I would drive out of it some demons that haunt it. There are false doctrines and false jealousies predominant there, at times, that it would be easy to exorcise."

The opposition demand for the papers, in the case of Mr. Jay's treaty, was carried, after a long and acrimonious discussion. This had inspired some doubts of their consent to appropriate money for carrying it into execution. Mr. Adams, in the next letter, alludes to this.

"1 April.

"The newspapers will inform you of our interminable delays. The House have asked for papers, and the President has refused them, with reasons; and the House are about to record, in their journals, their reasons; meanwhile, the business is in suspense, and I have no clear prospect when I shall get home.

"It is the general opinion of those I converse with, that after they have passed the resolutions which they think will justify them to their constituents, seven or eight of the majority will vote for the appropriations necessary to carry the treaties into execution.

"Next Wednesday is assigned for the House to take the President's message into consideration. Two Massachusetts members, Leonard and Freeman, are gone home, and three more are among the most inveterate of the opposition, Dearborn, Varnum, and Lyman. Our people are almost as inconsistent in returning such men, as the Pennsylvanians are in returning adventurers from Geneva, Britain, and Ireland. If the constitution is to give way under these contending parties, we shall see it before long. If the House persevere in refusing to vote the appropriations, we shall sit here till next March, for what I know, and wait for the people to determine the question for us. One good effect of a persevering opposition in the House would be that we should preserve the President for another four years. For I presume he will have sufficient spirit

to hold the helm till he has steered the ship through this storm, unless the people should remove him, which most certainly they will not.

"I will not sit here in summer, in all events. I would sooner resign my office. I will leave Philadelphia by the 6th or 7th of June, at farthest. Other gentlemen of the Senate and House are frequently asking leave of absence; but my attendance is perpetual, and will, if continued much longer, disorder my health, which hitherto has been very good. But I want my horse, my farm, my long walks, and, more than all, the bosom of my friend."

The retirement of President Washington removed the last check upon the fury of parties. Nobody else stood in the same relation to the whole people; and if even his name had latterly proved insufficient to silence obloquy, it very certainly followed that, for the future, no restraint could be expected in regard to any other. Of course, no expectation was entertained in any quarter that the person about to succeed him in office would be chosen by any general agreement. He was to be elected only upon the votes of one or the other of the parties into which the country was very equally divided. The question then narrowed itself down to a choice between the two men who might be brought forward, as the representatives of those parties, with the greatest prospect of success. The individual whom the opposition would sustain, with marked unanimity, was Thomas Jefferson. He had, from the day of leaving office, become the very soul of the movement, and had succeeded in inspiring its leading members with that species of reliance upon him as its head, which, in all great enterprises involving the agency of numbers, is a necessary element of victory. The federalists, on the other hand, enjoyed no such advantage. A portion of them, embracing many of the active and intelligent leaders in the Northern and Eastern States, reposed implicit confidence in Alexander Hamilton. But they were reluctantly compelled to admit that that confidence was not shared by the people at large,[1] and that an attempt to oppose him to Mr. Jefferson

[1] The manner in which this had been manifested to General Washington, at the time an envoy to Great Britain was to be selected, deterred him from thinking of Mr. Hamilton, who was in all other respects well fitted for the duty. See Marshall's *Washington*, vol. ii. p. 358, note. Edition of 1832.

would be futile. They were therefore driven to turn their eyes from the true object of their choice to others who might seem more likely to prevail.

Of these there were but two persons particularly prominent, John Jay and John Adams, both of them strong in character, in talents, and in services, and both meriting, to a great extent, the confidence of the friends of the established government. Both had been conspicuous objects of attack by the opposition, and both had suffered from it in their popularity. Of the two, however, Mr. Jay had been latterly the most severely handled, on account of his agency in negotiating the treaty with Great Britain, which had so narrowly escaped rejection. And the issue of the election, which had made him governor of his own State, New York, before the substance of that treaty had got abroad, was not so decisive as to dispel uneasiness at the idea of offering him immediately as a candidate for a still higher office. In addition to this, Mr. Jay had little strength in the Southern States; nor yet was he very firmly fixed in the affections of New England, a region the support of which was indispensable to the maintenance of the federal party. It was doubtful whether he could stem the popular feeling even in Massachusetts, which still gathered around Samuel Adams and Elbridge Gerry, in spite of their lukewarmness to the constitution and their later opposition. The only effective counterbalance was in John Adams, whose retirement would, it was feared, seriously endanger the federal predominance there. Such were the reasons which mainly contributed to the selection of him as the candidate for the succession, on the part of the federalists. Even the friends of Mr. Hamilton in Massachusetts, embracing the class of persons, already described in the analysis of parties which contributed to the establishment of the constitution of that State, who bore no good-will to Mr. Adams, either as a man or as a politician, were driven to adopt him, as under all circumstances the best instrument through whom at once to maintain their national policy and to fortify their influence at home.[1]

[1] This is not too strongly stated. Mr. Wolcott, writing to Fisher Ames, says: "It was not your fault, *nor that of any federal character*, that, in 1797, we had no other choice than between Mr. Adams and Mr. Jefferson." Gibbs's *Fed. Adm.* vol. ii. p. 400. Likewise Mr. Ames's letter, *ib.* p. 368.

Unfortunately, however, for this decision, one indispensable element to success in party struggles was overlooked. That element was perfect good faith. Had it been entirely preserved, the federalists would, even from their reduced vantage ground, have been able for some years longer to breast all opposition, however fierce. But it was not. The fact is now beyond dispute, that an indirect and clandestine effort was made at this election to set aside the person who had been openly accepted as the candidate of the federal party, in favor of another individual of whom nobody had thought in connection with the first office. This attempt was originated by Mr. Hamilton, and carried on through his particular friends in and out of New England. The mode selected was a perversion of the spirit, though not the letter, of the constitution, in that provision, as it was originally drawn, which regulated the form of voting in the Electoral Colleges. Every elector of President and Vice-President was directed to vote for two persons, without designating the office to which either was to be elevated. The consequence might easily follow, in a sharply contested election, that, with a little collusion on the part of two or three electors, in scattering here and there a vote, the person really intended for the second office would be found to have more votes than he who had been selected to fill the first. The same result might also be obtained by securing a perfectly equal vote for both in one section of the Union, under the expectation that local preferences would make the desired difference in another. In such case, the effect would be to reverse their destination, and the former would become President, and the latter, Vice-President.

Thomas Pinckney, of South Carolina, the individual in whose favor this secret diversion was attempted, was so little known to the great body of federalists, as scarcely to be relied upon to be one of their number. He had never been seriously spoken of as a successor to Washington, so that, had he been actually advanced to that position by virtue of this device, his election could never have been regarded in any other light than as a shrewd trick, to be sanctioned only by its success. As it turned out, the scheme utterly failed. But even the attempt was attended with the most fatal consequences to the federal party. It made the first spot on their good name, and was ominous

of the darker designs which were to follow. Mutual confidence ceased to exist, and the first sign of disaster immediately appeared. A rumor of the project soon got abroad, and spread distrust into every college of federal electors. Those of them who meant to act in good faith to Mr. Adams, determined, at all hazards, to cut off the possibility of such a result. As a consequence, eighteen, in New England alone, who voted for him, gave their second vote for some other person than Mr. Pinckney. The end of it was, his failure to gain the second place, for which he had been thought of. The aggregate number of votes for him was only fifty-nine, whilst that given for Mr. Jefferson, by the opposite party, reached sixty-eight. Hence, under the operation of the Constitution, Mr. Jefferson, though really the competitor for the Presidency, yet as standing second on the list of suffrages, became the Vice-President for four years. The great opponent of the federalists was thus put in a conspicuous place for the succession, by the very act of those who entertained a dread amounting almost to mania of the bare possibility of his elevation. Neither is this the only instance furnished by the records of a popular government, of the manner in which the keenest political contrivances are apt not only to baffle all the expectations formed of them, but to precipitate the very results against which they were designed most sedulously to provide.

The election proved a very close one. Mr. Adams received seventy-one votes, one more than the requisite number. But the quarter from which he obtained them, betrayed changes adverse to the further ascendency of the federalists. Pennsylvania now, for the first time in twenty years, deserted Massachusetts. Her electors, with one or two exceptions, voted for Mr. Jefferson, and for Aaron Burr. New York, on the other hand, never cordial to New England, had given, for the first time, her twelve votes to Mr. Adams, not without, however, associating with them exactly the same number for Thomas Pinckney. A single voice in Virginia and one in North Carolina, prompted by the lingering memory of revolutionary services, had turned the scale. Had these been given to Mr. Jefferson instead, he would have been President. South Carolina, on the other hand, steady to neither party, manifested the same sectional bias which has ever since marked her policy, by

dividing her votes between Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Pinckney. Had thirteen of the afore-mentioned eighteen New England electors voted for Pinckney, as Mr. Hamilton desired, they would have made him President. Through all this confusion, one thing only was clear, that the cohesion of principle, on the federal side, was greatly weakened. The land of William Penn had at last cut loose from her revolutionary alliance, and was henceforward to be regarded as the firmest support of the Virginia ascendency. Neither could this loss to Mr. Adams, who had done so much in originally forming that union, be at all made up by the equivocal fidelity offered by New York. Of these two great States, which exercise a paramount influence in determining the national policy, Pennsylvania, because the most true to one system, has been far the most successful in using her power with effect. No President, since 1796, has been chosen by the popular voice, whom she had not first designated by her wishes and her electoral votes.

Of all these various movements, Mr. Adams had not been an unobserving witness. He felt the insecurity of his position as a President of three votes, as he described himself, and those votes accidental tributes of personal esteem, not likely further to resist the engulfing tendencies of party passions. But these things did not disturb him, nor draw away his attention from the high nature of the responsibility to which he was called. He saw the country torn by dissensions, more or less connected with the fiery contest raging among the nations of Europe, and parties taking sides with zeal either for Great Britain or for France. So far as this had any tendency to affect the wholly neutral position of America, he was determined, at all hazards, to control it. He well knew the difficulties of the task before him, but they did not prevent his entertaining a sanguine hope of overcoming them. His spirit was of that kind which, lying perhaps too sluggish in days of calm, is fully called out only in the height of a tempest; which then glories in the occasion in proportion to the extent to which it tasks its power; which becomes calm and decided in action in the degree in which the disturbing elements seem to have the wildest play. He uttered no more than the truth, when, in writing to his wife at this time, he said: "John Adams must be an intrepid to encounter the open assaults of France, and the secret plots of England, in

concert with all his treacherous friends and open enemies in his own country. Yet, I assure you, he never felt more serene in his life."

The minister of France had not permitted the election to pass without an effort to affect the result. He had caused the publication of a note, addressed to the Secretary of State, recapitulating all the grounds of complaint against the federal administration. This is alluded to by Mr. Adams in the following note to his wife, which is interesting on many accounts, but particularly as showing how the sentiments in some quarters, which had become known to him, had affected him. It is proper to add that in a later note he expressed his own disbelief of the preference attributed to Mr. Jay.

"12 December, 1796.

"Adet's note has had some effect in Pennsylvania, and proved a terror to some Quakers; and that is all the ill effect it has had. Even the Southern States appear to resent it.

"If Colonel Hamilton's personal dislike of Jefferson does not obtain too much influence with Massachusetts electors, neither Jefferson will be President, nor Pinckney Vice-President.

"I am not enough of an Englishman, nor little enough of a Frenchman, for some people. These would be very willing that Pinckney should come in chief. But they will be disappointed.

"I find nobody here intimidated. Those who wish to say they are, dare not. There is a grand spirit in the Senate.

"Giles says, 'the point is settled. The V. P. will be President. He is undoubtedly chosen. The old man will make a good President, too.' (There's for you.) 'But we shall have to *check* him a little now and then. That will be all.' Thus Mr. Giles.

"I am just now come from pronouncing a most affectionate address of the Senate to the President, in answer to his speech. I felt so much that I was afraid I should betray a weakness, but I did not. I thought I was very firm and cool; but the senators say that I pronounced it in so affecting a manner that I made them cry. The tears did certainly trickle. The President himself was affected more tenderly than ever I saw him in my life, in pronouncing his reply.

"The southern gentlemen with whom I have conversed, have expressed more affection for me than they ever did before, since 1774. They certainly wish Adams elected rather than Pinckney.

Perhaps it is because Hamilton and Jay are said to be for Pinckney.

. . . . . .

"There have been manœuvres and combinations in this election that would surprise you. I may one day or other develop them to you.

"There is an active spirit, in the Union, who will fill it with his politics wherever he is. He must be attended to, and not suffered to do too much."

The day came when, as Vice-President, it was the official duty of Mr. Adams to declare the result of the election. The event was made the subject of a brief note, addressed to him by his wife, then at home in Quincy, which, for its simple beauty and truthful, womanly feeling, merits a place in this connection.

"Quincy, 8 February, 1797.

"'The sun is dressed in brightest beams
To give thy honors to the day.'

"And may it prove an auspicious prelude to each ensuing season. You have this day to declare yourself head of a nation. 'And now, O Lord, my God, thou hast made thy servant ruler over the people. Give unto him an understanding heart, that he may know how to go out and come in before this great people; that he may discern between good and bad. For who is able to judge this thy so great a people?' were the words of a royal sovereign; and not less applicable to him who is invested with the chief magistracy of a nation, though he wear not the crown, nor the robes of royalty.

"My thoughts and my meditations are with you, though personally absent; and my petitions to Heaven are that 'the things which make for peace may not be hidden from your eyes.' My feelings are not those of pride or ostentation upon the occasion. They are solemnized by a sense of the obligations, the important trusts and numerous duties connected with it. That you may be enabled to discharge them with honor to yourself, with justice and impartiality to your country, and with satisfaction to this great people, shall be the daily prayer of your A. A."

With this official announcement, the relations which the

Vice-President had for eight years continued to hold with the Senate, were felt by all to be changed, and it ceased to be expedient for him longer to preside over their deliberations. The time had not passed unpleasantly to him, for through the many vicissitudes of party conflicts he had succeeded in maintaining a cordial intercourse with the members, and in preserving an impartiality in the performance of his duties, which secured their good-will. Indeed, it may be doubted whether, on the whole, any period of his public life, of equal length, carried with it so many agreeable associations to his memory, and had so few of those drawbacks on enjoyment which must be found in the thorny paths of every statesman's career. Mr. Adams felt as if he could not vacate the chair he had been the first to occupy, and which he had held so long, without some manifestation of the sentiments that filled his breast. Accordingly, when, on the 15th of February, the Senate had accomplished its business for the day, and was about to adjourn, Mr. Adams rose, and, declaring his intention to avail himself of the leave of absence granted to him for the remainder of the session, seized the opportunity to add a few words of leave-taking. The speech which he made, and the answer subsequently returned on the part of the Senate, will be found in full in another part of this work. It will be sufficient here to insert the passage which most nearly touches his personal relations to the individuals of the body. To them he said: —

"I ought not to declare, for the last time, your adjournment, before I have presented to every senator present, and to every citizen who has ever been a senator of the United States, my thanks for the candor and favor invariably received from them all. It is a recollection of which nothing can ever deprive me; and it will be a source of comfort to me through the remainder of my life, that as, on the one hand, in a government constituted like ours, I have for eight years held the second situation under the constitution of the United States, in perfect and uninterrupted harmony with the first, without envy in one or jealousy in the other, so, on the other hand, I have never had the smallest misunderstanding with any member of the Senate. In all the abstruse questions, difficult conjunctures, dangerous emergencies, and animated debates upon the great interests of the country, which have so often and so deeply impressed all our minds, and

interested the strongest feelings of the heart, I have experienced a uniform politeness and respect from every quarter of the house. When questions of no less importance than difficulty have produced a difference of sentiment, (and differences of opinion will always be found in free assemblies of men, and probably the greatest diversities upon the greatest questions,) when the senators have been equally divided, and my opinion has been demanded, according to the constitution, I have constantly found in that moiety of the senators from whose judgment I have been obliged to dissent, a disposition to allow me the same freedom of deliberation and independence of judgment which they asserted for themselves."

With a significant assurance of his hope, founded upon experience of this body, that no more permanent council would ever be necessary to defend the rights, liberties, and properties of the people against the executive, on the one hand, and the representatives, on the other, he terminated this address.

Thus ended the connection of Mr. Adams with the Senate. His life there had been calm, dignified, and prosperous, contrasting in all these particulars most strikingly with the stormy and perilous career upon which he was about to embark. The history of that time is now to be given; a history, the true materials for which have remained for more than half a century buried under the burden accumulated by the passionate conflicts and the bitter calumnies that swarmed in it. To this day, writers, and actors prominent in the United States, have sedulously shunned every allusion to the matter which might involve the necessity of expressing a judgment upon its merits. Even the necessary landmarks to guide the pioneer in his laborious and uncertain path have, until a comparatively recent period, been obscured from public view. Many are still wanting, and may never be supplied. Yet, with the imperfect means at hand, directed by a disposition to analyze with calmness and to observe with fidelity, it does not seem impossible to present a sketch bearing something like internal evidence of its correctness. At all events, the task cannot be evaded in a biography of John Adams. Justice to his memory demands it. And however delicate the duty, involving, as it does, a necessity of exactly delineating the course of many leading actors of the time, as well as his own, it must be undertaken, subject to those

restrictions without observing which no narrative of the kind can be of the smallest ultimate value. Nothing shall be set down in malice, nothing which is not believed to be fully supported by evidence before the public, nothing which a Rhadamanthine judge of the most remote generation may not minutely scan, in order to pronounce upon it that sentence which is destined to remain graven indelibly upon the memory of mankind.

CHAPTER X.

The Presidency.

The obstacles which General Washington encountered in the attempt to reconstruct his cabinet during his second term of office have been already alluded to. After offering the chief post to five or six statesmen, always with the same ill-success, he was compelled at last to settle down upon the individual as the permanent officer, whom he had at first selected merely for the moment. This person was Colonel Timothy Pickering, of Massachusetts. In like manner, the earlier retirement of Mr. Hamilton from the treasury had been followed by a similar embarrassment, out of which the President had been relieved only by advancing Oliver Wolcott, Jr., of Connecticut, from the post of comptroller, which he had held for several years. So, too, in the case of General Knox, who declined to remain Secretary of War, the President, after vain attempts to enlist abler men, had been forced to pitch upon James McHenry, of Maryland, as the only person who could be persuaded to serve. Mr. McHenry, it is true, was an estimable man, but Washington himself, when afterwards excusing the original appointment on the ground that he had had Hobson's choice, agreed with other federalists in admitting that the selection had by no means been such as to give real aid to an administration.[1] The weakness of this combination, so long as the imposing presence of Washington was felt in the foreground, a representative of the whole people, was of comparatively little importance. But the moment that he retired from the field, giving place to a successor who had no similar basis of popular confidence to stand upon,

[1] The authorities to sustain the text are collected in a note in vol. ix. p. 51. There is, however, a letter of Mr. Hamilton to President Washington, not mentioned there, which gives a complete view of the difficulties in the way of reorganizing the cabinet at this period. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. pp. 61–63.

and who had just come in upon a chance majority of three electoral votes, it became of the most serious consequence. Apart from all other considerations, the geographical distribution of the members was singularly unfortunate. The President, and two leading members of the cabinet, were drawn from the small territorial extent of New England, whilst neither New York nor Pennsylvania had any representative at all, and the whole wide region of country south and west of the Potomac saw only Mr. Charles Lee, the attorney-general, as the guardian of its interests in the executive department. No bright associations with the struggles of the Revolution clustered around these men, as had been the case with their predecessors in office; not a shadow of that confidence which leading abilities will always inspire when in place under a popular form of government, attended them. So far as moral influence over the mind and feelings of the country is to be considered, Mr. Adams, when he consented to continue the same gentlemen in office, might as well have attempted to go on alone.

Neither was this the most serious disadvantage under which he labored. Nor was it only that these persons owed their advancement to no preference of his, and therefore felt less obligation to defer to his authority, or to strain their energies to carry out his policy. There was a source of weakness greater than all this. In point of fact, three of the four had been drawn from one section of the federal party, and that the one with which Mr. Adams had the least natural sympathy. Mr. Hamilton had been the effective agent through whom they had been promoted, and to him alone they looked as a guide for their own movements, as well as for directing those of the country.[1] Their accession to office marked the epoch when his preponderance in General Washington's administration had become established,[2] and they seemed to regard the substitution of a new

[1] See a remarkable letter of Colonel Pickering to Mr. Hamilton, explaining the causes of his own promotion, and the reasons of his acceptance. The following words are of great significance: "The President, beyond all doubt, will at the close of his present term retire forever from public life. We do not know who will succeed him. Our internal politics, and our exterior relations, may be deeply affected by the character and principles of the President, *and the Secretary of State.*" *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. pp. 67–69.

[2] The nature and extent of Mr. Hamilton's influence is curiously illustrated by the tone of his letter to Oliver Wolcott, of the 15th June, 1796. *Works of Hamilton*, vol. vi. pp. 129–131.

President as in no way derogating from the liberty which they had taken of differing with and even sometimes of overruling the old one. Indeed, their construction of their official rights was far more latitudinarian than any since permitted, even in the liberal day of Mr. Jefferson. It resembled a joint claim upon the executive power, rather than the right to advise the President, and the duty ultimately to defer to his decision, however adverse to their opinion. Both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury were naturally little prone to bend. They proved at times reluctant to respect even the great authority which encircled Washington. If so disposed towards him, how much less prepared were they to yield to the will of his successor, should he venture to insist upon a system of his own. There is no evidence that, at the outset, any one but Mr. Wolcott passed the formal compliment of offering to resign, in order to allow him a free choice of his advisers. But even had they all done so, no reason exists for presuming that he would have availed himself of the offers. He was disposed to place entire confidence in their coöperation and support. A change must have been attended with more or less of dissatisfaction in some quarters, and it was his desire to harmonize, rather than to distract public sentiment. His sanguine and self-reliant temperament led him to underrate difficulties. He thought he should bring his secretaries into his views, without a doubt. But not many days elapsed in his official career before he had reason to suspect that the task he had assumed would not prove so easy as he had imagined. The difference of opinion which then took place, most seriously compromising his prospect of free action as executive chief, was the premonition of the causes that led to the rupture with and final dispersion of his transmitted council.

The most pressing danger, to avert which was the immediate duty of the new government, threatened from abroad. The mission of Mr. Jay to Great Britain, and the whole negotiation which followed, had been viewed with such unequivocal distrust by the French republicans and the party sympathizing with them in the United States, as to prompt a desire on the part of General Washington to neutralize its effects by an extraordinary manifestation of good-will to France. Conscious that the course of Gouverneur Morris had not been altogether such

as the revolutionary party might have had a right to expect from an American envoy, he determined upon selecting, as a compensation, a successor from among the class known to be hearty well-wishers to them, even though he should be an opponent of his own administration, and dissenting from his policy. In this spirit he picked out James Monroe, of Virginia, through whom he hoped to insure a hearty welcome to the national mission, and a useful channel for the restoration of a good understanding. But, however well intended this proceeding, it met with no corresponding success. Mr. Monroe proved either inefficient, or lukewarm, or unfortunate; and he satisfied his employer so little, that he finally decided on recalling him, and substituting in his place General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, of South Carolina. Mr. Pinckney had been known at home as a federalist so moderate as to be classed by some as a neutral.[1] But the French Directory, to whom Mr. Monroe seems to have made himself acceptable, not unwilling to strike some stroke in the domestic politics of the United States favorable to the ascendency of those they called their friends, determined upon visiting their resentment for his recall upon the head of his successor. To this end they instituted an imposing ceremony of leave-taking for Mr. Monroe, marked by a speech not a little offensive to the American government, and they utterly refused in any way to recognize Mr. Pinckney. They would not even permit him to remain within the limits of the French territory.

It was in the midst of these events that the change of administration occurred. Washington retired, not averse to an honorable discharge from the labor of unravelling this hard knot, and Mr. Adams came in, determined to make the attempt, but not without anxiety about the best mode of seizing the clue. He was a party man, and heartily agreed in the early views of the federalists; but his heart reluctd at placing his administration at the outset upon any bottom less broad than that which had been laid by his predecessor. Neither could he see the wisdom of adopting a rule of exclusion from office, the effect of which would be to aggravate dissensions already too much weakening the spirit of resistance, instead of

[1] He is so described by Mr. Wolcott, Gibbs's *Fed. Adm.* vol. i. p. 487, and by Mr. Hamilton, *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 247.

uniting the people better to counteract the insidious devices of the enemy from without.

In this spirit was the inaugural speech drawn up, with which he entered on his duties. Few efforts of the kind contain, within so narrow a compass, a more comprehensive view of a policy suitable for the chief magistrate of the United States, of any party. Not unaware of the rumors that had been sedulously spread against him, of his desire to alter the existing form of government, and to introduce something which had "an awful squinting to a monarchy," and not insensible of the importance of putting an end to them by a frank denial, he seized the opportunity to express his entire satisfaction with the constitution, as conformable to such a system of government as he had ever most esteemed, and in his own State had contributed to establish. Then, going to the root of these calumnies, he added the decisive words: "It was not then, nor has been since, any objection to it in my mind, that the Executive and Senate were not more permanent. Nor have I entertained a thought of promoting any alterations in it but such as the people themselves, in the course of their experience, should see and feel to be necessary or expedient, and, by their representatives in congress and the state legislatures, according to the constitution itself, adopt and ordain."

Having thus removed the obstacles heretofore put in his way, he next declared the principles that should guide him for the future. With a high compliment to the administration as well as to the personal character of his predecessor, he proceeded to give, in one of the longest sentences in the language, his whole creed. Yet long as it is, perhaps none was ever constructed by a statesman with less redundance to convey the same amount of meaning. After alluding to the general satisfaction felt with the course taken by Washington as a model for the imitation of his successors, he added these words: "The occasion, I hope, will be admitted as an apology, if I venture to say, that, if a preference upon principle of a free republican government, formed upon long and serious reflection, after a diligent and impartial inquiry after truth; if an attachment to the constitution of the United States, and a conscientious determination to support it, until it shall be altered by the judgments and wishes of the people, expressed in the mode

prescribed in it; if a respectful attention to the constitutions of the individual States, and a constant caution and delicacy towards the state governments; if an equal and impartial regard to the rights, interests, honor, and happiness of all the States in the Union, without preference or regard to a northern or southern, eastern or western position, their various political opinions on essential points, or their personal attachments; if a love of virtuous men of all parties and denominations; if a love of science and letters, and a wish to patronize every rational effort to encourage schools, colleges, universities, academies, and every institution for propagating knowledge, virtue, and religion among all classes of the people, not only for their benign influence on the happiness of life in all its stages and classes, and of society in all its forms, but as the only means of preserving our constitution from its natural enemies, the spirit of sophistry, the spirit of party, the spirit of intrigue, profligacy, and corruption, and the pestilence of foreign influence, which is the angel of destruction to elective governments; if a love of equal laws, of justice and humanity in the interior administration; if an inclination to improve agriculture, commerce, and manufactures for necessity, convenience, and defence; if a spirit of equity and humanity towards the aboriginal nations of America, and a disposition to meliorate their condition, by inclining them to be more friendly to us, and our citizens to be more friendly to them; if an inflexible determination to maintain peace and inviolable faith with all nations, and that system of neutrality and impartiality among the belligerent powers of Europe, which has been adopted by the government, and so solemnly sanctioned by both Houses of congress, and applauded by the legislatures of the States and the public opinion, until it shall be otherwise ordained by congress; if a personal esteem for the French nation, formed in a residence of seven years, chiefly among them, and a sincere desire to preserve the friendship which has been so much for the honor and interest of both nations; if, while the conscious honor and integrity of the people of America, and the internal sentiment of their own power and energies must be preserved, an earnest endeavor to investigate every just cause, and remove every colorable pretence, of complaint; if an intention to pursue, by amicable negotiation, a reparation for the injuries that have been com-

mitted on the commerce of our fellow-citizens, by whatever nation, and (if success cannot be obtained) to lay the facts before the legislature, that they may consider what further measures the honor and interest of the government and its constituents demand; if a resolution to do justice, as far as may depend upon me, at all times, and to all nations, and maintain peace, friendship, and benevolence with all the world; if an unshaken confidence in the honor, spirit, and resources of the American people, on which I have so often hazarded my all, and never been deceived; if elevated ideas of the high destinies of this country, and of my own duties towards it, founded on a knowledge of the moral principles and intellectual improvement of the people, deeply engraven on my mind in early life, and not obscured, but exalted by experience and age; and with humble reverence I feel it my duty to add, if a veneration for the religion of a people who profess and call themselves Christians, and a fixed resolution to consider a decent respect for Christianity among the best recommendations for the public service, — can enable me, in any degree, to comply with your wishes, it shall be my strenuous endeavor that this sagacious injunction of the two Houses shall not be without effect."

When deeply stirred by internal emotion, Mr. Adams's manner became grave and very impressive. Nothing short of this could have made the delivery of so elaborate a paragraph at all effective before a large audience. The next day he wrote to his wife, in his most natural and candid manner: —

"Your dearest friend never had a more trying day than yesterday. A solemn scene it was, indeed; and it was made more affecting to me by the presence of the General, whose countenance was as serene and unclouded as the day. He seemed to me to enjoy a triumph over me. Methought I heard him say: 'Ay! I am fairly out, and you fairly in! See which of us will be happiest.'

"When the ceremony was over, he came and made me a visit, and cordially congratulated me, and wished my administration might be happy, successful, and honorable.

"In the chamber of the House of Representatives was a multitude as great as the space could contain, and I believe scarcely a dry eye but Washington's. The sight of the sun setting full

orbed, and another rising, though less splendid, was a novelty. Chief Justice Ellsworth administered the oath, and with great energy. Judges Cushing, Wilson, and Iredell were present. Many ladies. I had not slept well the night before, and did not sleep well the night after. I was unwell, and did not know whether I should get through or not. I did, however. How the business was received, I know not, only I have been told that Mason, the treaty publisher, said we should lose nothing by the change, for he never heard such a speech in public in his life.

"All agree that, taken altogether, it was the sublimest thing ever exhibited in America."

The fact is unquestionable, that this speech was very well received by the public at large. Even the members of the opposition declared themselves relieved by it from much anxiety, and disposed to await further developments of the executive policy. Mr. Jefferson, on taking his post as Vice-President, had gone so far as to declare that the high functions of the first office had been "justly confided" to Mr. Adams, and to deprecate any untoward event which should devolve the duties of it during his term of office upon himself. The only persons who manifested discontent, were to be found among the federalists sympathizing with Mr. Hamilton. They lamented its tone as temporizing. Their party feeling would have prompted a thorough demarcation of the line between themselves and the opposition, by the delineation of a policy which every man should be obliged to notice, and by the acceptance or rejection of which his own position should be unmistakably defined. The avoidance of this course in the address was ominous to them of the accession to the chair of a man who would not meet their expectations; and this suspicion other events, which soon came to their knowledge, had a strong tendency to confirm.

The day before the inauguration, Mr. Adams had taken pains to seek out Mr. Jefferson, in order to propose to him to undertake the difficult experiment of reopening the avenues of negotiation with France. This was to be attempted by the establishment of a wholly new commission, formed on such principles of fair combination as to preclude every pretext for objection on the part of the French republic. And the first proof of this

intention was to be found in the character and opinions of the Vice-President himself. Mr. Jefferson appears to have met this proposition with less cordiality than it merited at his hands. For though his reasons for declining to accept it himself were certainly valid, and were admitted to be so by Mr. Adams, there was no similar excuse for the lukewarmness visible in promoting the acceptance of the offer, when extended to Mr. Madison, and perhaps others of his friends. In the difficulties in which the administration was plunged, it was far more pleasant to dwell in the tents of opposition, than to be drawn out of them by a proposal of alliance in responsibilities which might cut off profitable complaint under failure, or divert elsewhere the advantages of success. Had this overture been accepted, important consequences might have followed at an early day, of which one might have been a reorganization of the cabinet. For it should be remarked that the first intimation of his idea, made by Mr. Adams, immediately after the inauguration, to Mr. Wolcott, then at the head of the treasury, was received by the latter with consternation, as a signal for his retirement. So far from favoring further advances to bring the opposition into a united effort to preserve peace with France, he had made up his mind that the effort itself was not worth repeating in any shape, until some opening should be made by her. Yet the alternative was embargo or war. For the depredations on American commerce, unblushing as they were unbounded, could only be checked by restraining navigation, or else defending it by arms. But an embargo was ruinous to trade, whilst war imperilled the finances. Mr. Adams had no inclination to assume responsibility for such consequences, so long as they could be honestly avoided. Yet finding that perseverance in his project might lead to an immediate difference with his cabinet, which he did not seek, whilst it met with no hearty response elsewhere, he at once abandoned all thoughts of Mr. Madison, and postponed, to a later moment, any decision upon the measure itself.

The chief members of the executive council, Colonel Pickering and Mr. Wolcott, had been long in the habit of looking outside of it for the general direction of the policy adopted within. This habit, formed from the time of their accession in Washington's administration, was now kept up without the smallest idea of any obligation on their part to apprise the

new President of its existence. Of course, communications, more or less free, of what was said or done in the cabinet, were the consequence. In this way, Alexander Hamilton, the recipient of them, was become all-powerful in guiding the movements of the government. It had been so in the last days of Washington, and it was not likely to be less so after his dignified attitude ceased to inspire moderation, and when a much less popular chief was in his place. To the latter as the official incumbent, brought in without any hearty wish of theirs, they were, of course, bound outwardly to defer; but it is plain from their own admissions, that in all important questions they looked to Mr. Hamilton, and not to him, as the suitable guide of their action.[1] As a consequence, it followed that unity in the executive policy became likely only when the President should happen, without knowing it, to fix upon the same measures which Mr. Hamilton suggested. And in all important cases of difference, the probability was strong that the President would find his wishes either ineffectively seconded, or ultimately overruled. Such, from small beginnings, grew to be the settled practice under this administration. Happily for the issue of the first measure, when revived a few weeks later, Mr. Hamilton had thought of it too, and had earnestly pressed it on his friends as one of the first necessity. He had even gone the length of proposing the selection of Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison, or some equally marked representative of the opposition, as one member of the joint commission. These ideas he had early directed some of his friends in congress to lay before the President himself. This unexpected reinforcement of Mr. Adams's wishes carried the day over the repugnance of the secretaries. But they yielded, not without great misgivings. Mr. Wolcott, especially, saw in this concession some dangers, which scarcely excited the observation of the others. He then began to conceive the possibility of failure in guiding the will of Mr. Adams, and dimly to discern the results to which it might lead. Prudence was essential, or a change of counsellors might be

[1] The opposition of Mr. Wolcott to the new mission, stiff whilst he supposes Mr. Adams alone to favor it, becomes ductile when he traces the same sentiment to Mr. Hamilton. See his letter to Hamilton of 31 March, 1797. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 221. Colonel Pickering appealed to him from a check by Mr. Adams, within the first month. *Ib.* p. 220.

attended with a more or less complete ejection from the strongholds of power.[1]

The intelligence received from France came in to hasten the necessity of making a decision. An act of the Directory, of the 2d of March, had followed the expulsion of Mr. Pinckney, which, in substance, annulled the rule of *free ships*, *free goods*, ingrafted into the treaty of 1778, and declared all Americans found serving on board the vessels of Great Britain, pirates, to be treated without mercy. Under these circumstances, war would be justifiable. The only question was whether it would be expedient. In order to determine this point, the President requested the written answers of the members of his cabinet to a series of fourteen questions covering all the necessary points. This was on the 14th of April. A proclamation had already been issued, summoning congress to attend at Philadelphia at an extraordinary session, on the fifteenth day of May, there to receive the important communications which he was about to prepare out of these deliberations.

In answering the President's questions, not a single cabinet officer was found explicitly to recommend a declaration of war. All now acquiesced in the project of reviving negotiation by initiating a new and solemn commission, and some suggested means of facilitating a settlement. The commission having been determined upon, another step was, to designate the three commissioners. Mr. Adams still retained the wish to give one of the number to the opposition. He therefore suggested the union of his old friend of the Revolution, Elbridge Gerry, with General Pinckney and John Marshall. But this idea at once revived all the alarms of his advisers. Mr. Gerry had opposed the constitution, and had been ever since most obnoxious in Massachusetts to the particular class of federalists to which the secretaries belonged. Mr. Adams had casually dropped the name of another friend, Francis Dana. They strongly pressed to have him preferred; and, although this was giving to the commission a purely federal color, contrary to his original design, he cheerfully yielded to their desire. The very last fault that can be justly found with his course is that of a disposition

[1] The substance of this paragraph may be gathered from a close study of the guarded intimations contained in the letter of Mr. Wolcott to Hamilton, above cited.

to control their will. With the lights now furnished respecting their conduct, his error lay rather in conceding too much. But his nomination of Mr. Dana was of no avail, for that gentleman declined the trust, on the score of his health. And when the question came up anew, no second name was at hand to present, which could be made again to preponderate over the earlier selection; so Mr. Gerry received the nomination. The President's counsellors now felt that they were to struggle for their power. Mr. Adams might be bent to a certain point, but he could not be controlled. The expectations with which they entered on their places under him must be abandoned. And henceforth they were to retain them with a view, so far as might be, to rectify his deviations from their policy, and especially to keep the cabinet from going into the hands of other men.

A short time before the decision last mentioned, congress had assembled. The cabinet all cordially coöperated in preparing the opening speech, which must be conceded to be one of the most manly and dignified state papers that ever emanated from the American executive. Its simple recital of the offensive action of France at once rallied the spirit of the members to the support of their own government. Both Houses replied in warm approbation of the policy recommended, and the Senate soon afterwards ratified the nominations of the new commissioners. The federalists, fortified by the reaction everywhere springing up against France, on account of the excesses of her revolutionary era, showed a degree of strength to which they had for some time been strangers. Yet so fierce was the opposition that no attempt was made to press measures of an extreme character. The warmer friends of government complained of a want of vigor. Mr. Hamilton prepared for the use of the Secretary of the Treasury his views of the different objects of taxation, from which further sums might be obtained to the revenue in the present contingency. Of these, congress adopted only the ominous item of stamps, the very name of which did more disservice to government than all the sums collected from it could compensate for. They authorized a small loan of less than a million, and passed several acts, of which the chief were those against privateering, and the exportation of arms, for the further protection of the ports of the United States and for the increase of the naval armament. The time expended on these

labors little exceeded three weeks, and both Houses adjourned in season to escape at Philadelphia all danger from the impending pestilence. Mr. Adams returned to his family at Quincy, having good reason to be satisfied with this outset. The commissioners were soon put on their way to the scene of their labors, and the whole country rested for a while, in earnest but quiet expectation of the intelligence which should announce the fate of the latest overtures to reconciliation.

Unluckily for the repose of the world, negotiations with France during the closing years of the last century had no fixed data upon which to calculate any probable issue. The men who held power, changed often; and the tone they took towards foreign nations, whilst they held it, depended less upon notions of equity and justice than upon the latest tidings from the armies of the republic. Unfortunate indeed is that country, the character of whose officers has no other recommendation than the single fact of the popular choice. None know better than the elect how soon that factitious value will vanish. As it happened, Messrs. Marshall, Pinckney, and Gerry reached Paris at a moment of extraordinary national intoxication. The young chief, who was about to astonish Europe with his deeds, and fill the world with his fame, was then beginning to make his employers sensible of the value of his energy. He had been cognizant of the *coup d'état*, under which the legislative and executive departments had been riven in twain, and the best part of the members exiled. And his victorious march in Italy was the sign under which the usurping section hoped to hold their power, maugre all resistance. The sport of fortune, the ordinary men who now held the reins, saw in their position no objects higher than the opportunity to enrich themselves. Napoleon's successes opened a paradise of jobs from army contractors, besides placing the Directory in a situation to dictate their own terms to weaker nations. Happy chance for such men as Barras, and Rewbell, and Merlin, just now turning up in their lives, soon to end, and never to return! But unhappy chance to all countries deemed weak in resources, which might be brought to deprecate the enmity of France, and pray for protection not to be had without a price! And particularly unfortunate chance to the United States, not yet strong enough to make their anger a cause of fear, whilst their commerce, which

was growing to whiten every sea, presented a rich prey wherewith to fatten the officials of the hour!

It was to a government like this, that three single-hearted men, guiltless of a trick of diplomacy or a thought of venality, had been addressed, under the delusive notion that good sense, and truth, and justice might avail to procure an adjustment of every honest difference. The result may easily be conceived. They were met by arts against which they proved no match, by round-about contrivances to ascertain, before recognizing their position, what price they would offer for a treaty. And when the fact became certain that money was not to be made out of them, an adroit effort followed to dissociate the two most impracticable commissioners from the third and more sympathizing one, in order to try the luck of an appeal to him alone. It was all in vain, however. Mr. Gerry, though he permitted the Directory to create an invidious and insulting distinction, gave them no opening for advantage over himself. Of his honesty and his patriotism, however it may have been disputed during the high party times that followed, no impartial person, at this day, will entertain a doubt. And whatever may have been his facility, it should be remembered that the same had been shown, in the same place, by no less a predecessor than Dr. Franklin. The Directory, foiled in their game, ceased to feel an interest in playing it further. Even before Mr. Gerry retired, inexorable to their solicitation to treat, signs appeared of their disposition not to press matters so far as to cut off every opportunity to retrace their steps.

This was a despicable species of adventure for such a noble country as France. Neither is it to be supposed that it would have been attempted in many other stages of its history. But it is in the nature of popular convulsions, when continued for a length of time, gradually to throw to the surface such dregs, that at last the whole community gasps in expectation of the bold hand which will at a single sweep skim them off from the sight. The hand that was ultimately to do this thing, was the very one yet interested to uphold the evil. To affront the United States irretrievably was the height of folly; for, admitting them to be of little positive weight in the scale of nations, they were yet not without power to harm, especially on the ocean, and if allied, as such treatment would inevitably drive

them to be, with Great Britain, France's most dreaded foe, might prove formidable. Besides, the moral effect was exceedingly bad, in withering the sympathies of that large class of American citizens who had persisted, at every disadvantage, in upholding France at home. It was ungrateful, to say the least, towards those who had persevered, through all the odium incurred by their crimes, in glorying in the successes of their dear allies, as they loved to call them, to suffer them to be precipitated into the very jaws of the British lion. These considerations were disregarded a little too long. And when they began to be respected, the consequences were beyond the opportunity of recall.

For, in the mean time, the popular feeling in the United States was daily growing more adverse to France, and more friendly to the administration. The evidence of this became unequivocal upon the reassembly of the two Houses of congress at the regular session in November. No decisive tidings had then been received, so that the opening speech was confined to a simple reference to the difficulties, coupled with a recommendation, in any event, to provide suitable protection for the national commerce. Allusion was briefly made to the state of the relations with other powers, but no suggestion of specific measures followed. It is clear that the time for being explicit had not yet arrived. But it was already far on its way. Mr. Adams, so early as the 24th of January, 1798, in anticipation of the expected intelligence, deemed it prudent to address to the members of his cabinet a letter, requesting their views of the course proper to be taken, in case the commissioners should have failed in accomplishing the objects of their mission. Should a declaration of war be recommended? or an embargo? Should any change be attempted, contingent upon that event, in the nature of the relations held with other European powers in general, and most particularly with Great Britain?

These were questions of the deepest importance. The manner of putting them betrayed nothing of the sentiments of the interrogator, beyond a marked disinclination to any approaches towards Great Britain. It is not absolutely certain whether the secretaries of state and of the treasury sent in any separate answers. At all events, none are found among Mr. Adams's papers. That the former wrote at this time to consult Mr.

Hamilton about the expediency of an alliance offensive and defensive with Great Britain, and that he received an answer, appears elsewhere. But there is no trace of a suggestion of the kind to the President. The only one of the cabinet who proposed a declaration of war, was the attorney-general, Mr. Lee. The remaining member, Mr. McHenry, sent in an answer, in which he dissuaded from a formal declaration, on account of the aversion felt for it by a large portion of the people, but, at the same time, laid down a series of seven propositions to be recommended to congress, the effect of which, if adopted, would have been, if not to make war, at least to place the country on a footing to make it, both by sea and land. They were these: —

1. Permission to merchant ships to arm.
2. The construction of twenty sloops of war.
3. The completion of the frigates already authorized.
4. Authority, in case of a rupture, to the President to provide, "*by such means as he may judge best*," ships of the line, not exceeding ten.
5. The suspension of the treaties with France.
6. An immediate army of sixteen thousand men, and a provisional one of twenty thousand more.
7. A loan, and an adequate system of taxation.

This paper is of the utmost importance to a clear conception of the internal movement of this administration; because there are the strongest reasons for presuming that, instead of being Mr. McHenry's simply, it contains the joint conclusions of Mr. Hamilton and the three secretaries under his influence. The recommendations are almost identically those which appear in Mr. Hamilton's private letters to Mr. Pickering.[1] But in addition to this, the paper closed with some suggestions which show a coincidence even more marked with the peculiar policy which that gentleman was at the same time advocating in his correspondence.

Yet the place in which this appears the most striking, is in that portion of the answer which touches upon the relations to

[1] Compare the seven propositions, with the seven in *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. pp. 269–271. The only difference is in the recommendation to fortify the principal ports, and to raise fifty thousand men instead of thirty-six. That McHenry was in the habit of drawing upon Hamilton for his papers is shown in other places. *Hamilton's Works*, vol. v. *passim*. Vol. vi. pp. 267, 282.

be observed with Great Britain. Deprecating a formal alliance as inexpedient rather than as improper, it yet recommended that overtures should be made through Mr. King, to obtain a loan, the aid of convoys, and perhaps the transfer of ten ships of the line, *should congress give the authority to obtain so many;* and, what is most significant of all, it urged that, in case of rupture, a *coöperation* should be secured, by Great Britain's lodging ample powers of execution in the hands of her envoy to the United States, the object of which should be the conquest of the Floridas, Louisiana, and Spanish South America; all the territory on the east side of the Mississippi, together with the port of New Orleans, to be the share of the spoils allotted to the United States.[1]

A comparison of these views with the reputed capacity of the person claiming the paternity of them, as well as with those expressed by Mr. Hamilton to other persons, makes the inference irresistible that they were actually supplied by the latter,

[1] In order that there may be no doubt on this subject, an extract from Mr. McHenry's opinion is subjoined: —

"As to England. Notwithstanding her naval victories and undisputed control of the ocean, her fate remains yet perhaps precarious, and must continue so, as long as invasion remains practicable or possible. This consideration may render it best to avoid entangling ourselves with an *alliance*. It may be said, besides, that the interest she has in our fate will command as much from her as a treaty; that, moreover, if she can maintain her own ground, she will not see us fall, and if she cannot, our help will not maintain her, and a treaty will not be observed. It may be said further; if we enter into an *alliance*, and France should endeavor to detach us from it, by offering advantageous terms of peace, it would be a difficult and dangerous task to the President to resist the popular cry for acceptance of her terms.

"Upon the whole, it would appear the safest course to avoid any *formal treaty*, and to do no more than to communicate through Mr. King the measures in train; to sound Great Britain as to a loan; as to convoys; and coöperation in case of open rupture, pointing the coöperation to the Floridas, Louisiana, and the South American possessions of Spain, if rupture, as is probable, should extend to her; to prevail on Britain to lodge in her minister here ample authority for all these purposes, as far as they can be managed by him, but to do all this without any formal engagement or commitment in the first instance. It might also be thrown out, in the event of coöperation, that we should expect all on this side the Mississippi, with New Orleans, to be ours. It would also appear expedient to direct a provisional negotiation to be opened for ten ships of the line, to be manned and commanded by us, to have effect, should congress give authority to the President, in case of open rupture, to provide so many. It would be best to charge with the instructions a confidential messenger."

Compare with this, Hamilton's letter to Pickering, printed in his *Works*, vol. vi. p. 278, and that to King, p. 348, and the later policy, as hereafter explained. The plan seems to have been communicated to the British government through Mr. King, but not as coming from the American government. This needs further explanations. *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 368.

and that the knowledge of this fact was the reason why the other two cabinet officers felt themselves dispensed from the necessity of offering separate opinions.

All this had been done by way of preparation for probable events. When the news arrived which gave them a definite shape, and the details of the attempts upon the firmness of the commissioners, which had been instigated by the Directory, had been spread before the cabinet, Mr. Adams once more submitted questions to his advisers. They were now reduced to two: —

1. Should all the particulars be disclosed at once to congress?
2. Should the President recommend a declaration of war?

Again no answer came from the chief secretaries. Mr. McHenry contented himself with appealing to his former exposition of his views, to which he had nothing to add. And Mr. Lee, with a provident regard for the personal safety of the commissioners not yet known to be beyond the jurisdiction of France, only proposed a delay until that point should have been placed beyond a doubt.

With these views before him, Mr. Adams was now called upon to take a definite course. Of the source of the policy proposed to him by Mr. McHenry, he seems to have had no suspicion. But so far as it looked to more intimate connections with Great Britain, the argumentative form in which he put his questions[1] sufficiently shows that it met with no favoring response in his bosom. It was at war with the whole theory of his life, and all the lessons of his experience. It is not unlikely that his conversation betrayed his opinions, for Mr. Pickering, very soon after this, communicated a significant hint to Mr. Hamilton, that the animosities engendered by the Revolution "*in some breasts*"[2] would probably make the plan of coöperation impracticable. The fact is certain that no further direct effort was made to establish it through the agency of the President. Waving all the recommendations that looked to such a result, he adopted the draft of a message prepared by Mr. Wolcott. But a single paragraph written by himself appears in this paper. It communicated his own intentions in the following terms: —

[1] The questions are to be found in vol. viii. pp. 561–62.

[2] Pickering to Hamilton. *Works of Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 307.

"The present state of things is so essentially different from that in which instructions were given to collectors to restrain vessels of the United States from sailing in an armed condition, that the principle in which those orders were issued has ceased to exist. I therefore deem it proper to inform congress, that I no longer conceive myself justifiable in continuing them, unless in particular cases, where there may be reasonable ground of suspicion that such vessels are intended to be employed contrary to law."

This message was sent to both Houses on the 19th of March, 1798. It recommended no new measures, but repeated the exhortation to prepare for protection and defence made in former communications, as the result of a mature consideration of the dispatches. The dispatches themselves were, with a single exception, held back. That exception notified the government of a new act of hostility, forfeiting all neutral ships covering any productions of England, and shutting up France even to such as should, in their voyage, have barely touched at an English port. The message announced the failure of the mission, but gave no details of its proceedings. The papers had been reserved, for the reasons suggested by the attorney-general. But with such a determination the impatience of neither party was content. Dignified and temperate as was the tone of the executive, Mr. Jefferson, fastening for a ground of complaint upon the single measure of self-defence, the withdrawal of the prohibition upon merchant ships to go armed, an act certainly not extravagant in the face of so violent a French decree, denominated this "an *insane* message;" whilst Mr. Hamilton, unsatisfied so long as no disclosure had been made of facts from which he clearly foresaw the advantages to inure to the party with which he was associated, set in motion, through a member of the House, a demand for the production of the documents withheld. This was adopted on the 2d of April, and the response returned in twenty-four hours. Thus came before the country a full disclosure of the tissue of intrigues, woven in France in order to extort money from the American commissioners. But out of superfluous consideration for the feelings of the three private individuals who had been prevailed upon to serve as go-betweens, Colonel Pickering, the Secretary of State, suppressed their names, and substituted for them the last three

letters of the alphabet, X. Y. Z. Hence it happened that in popular parlance these dispatches came to be generally known as the X. Y. Z. correspondence.

Upon the arrival of General Marshall in the United States, the President sent another message to congress, bearing date 21st June, 1798, transmitting a dispatch from Mr. Gerry, who yet remained in Paris, which completed the series of papers belonging to the negotiation. At the end, he added these important words: —

"I will never send another minister to France without assurances that he will be received, respected, and honored as the representative of a great, free, powerful, and independent nation."

It is necessary to a right understanding of the events that followed, to bear the terms of this engagement clearly in mind. For in the different constructions given to it is to be found the ostensible cause of the division that took place in the ranks of the federal party.

The publication by congress of all the papers was like the falling of a spark into a powder magazine. Among the friends of France who had, down to this moment, with praiseworthy constancy, adhered to their allies, even through all the accumulated horrors of their revolutionary days, the news spread utter dismay, precluding them from defence or justification. Even the sanguine Jefferson beheld with consternation the peril to all his brightest anticipations from the huge rising wave of national feeling which promised to carry his federal opponents for a long way in triumph on its crest. The return of the commissioners only served to bring the popular enthusiasm to its height. There was but one voice to be heard, and that was in denunciation of the arrogance and profligacy of France, and in warm approbation of every measure calculated to uphold the dignity and the honor of the United States. The opportunity was a critical one to the individuals intrusted with power. Wisely improved, it would have insured the ascendency of their policy for years to come. Slighted or abused to gain equivocal ends, it might only prove the occasion of a more fatal overthrow. How it was actually used, it is one of the objects of the present narrative faithfully and impartially to disclose.

From what has been already described of the cabinet action,

the position of the President may now be pretty distinctly perceived. Surrounded by advisers, three of whom were proposing a system of measures prompted by a gentleman not known by him to be in the secret of his counsels, and not at all in harmony with his own ideas, he seems to have declined the responsibility of assuming the recommendation of it, and to have chosen the safer course of devolving upon the two houses of congress, as the proper arbiters, the task of determining what it was best for the nation, under the circumstances, to do. Down to this time he seems to have entertained little distrust of Mr. Hamilton himself, and not the slightest suspicion of the nature of the influences brought to bear upon himself. It was only when his obvious disinclination to the policy offered to his acceptance had the effect of transferring the theatre for the exercise of them from the seclusion of his secret council to the public arena of the two houses, that he could begin to gather data upon which to form some notion of the perils by which he was beset.

Among the younger and more active members of the federal party in the north and east, Mr. Hamilton had gradually become an idol. Without much hold upon the judgment or the affections of the people at large, he had yet, by the effect of his undisputed abilities and his masculine will, gained great sway over the minds of the intelligent merchants along the Atlantic border. His previous doctrines, in unison with the feelings and interests of the most conservative class, had drawn to him their particular confidence, whilst his position in the first administration had facilitated the establishment by him of a chain of influence, resting for its main support on his power over the mind of Washington himself, but carried equally through all the ramifications of the executive department. Thus it happened that even after he ceased to be personally present, his opinions continued to shape the policy of Washington's second administration and even that of his successor. But since the day of his retirement from the treasury he had thus far manifested no desire to reënter public life, or to assume any direct share in the regulation of affairs. The prospect of a conflict with France seems to have been the first cause of a change of intention. He now showed signs of a wish not merely to devise the whole system of action, on the part

of the government, but likewise to be in a position to direct its execution. He began to foresee a crisis worthy to call forth all his latent powers.

The President's voluntary act, by which the responsibility of initiating the desired system was transferred from the executive to the legislative department, was not unfavorable to the development of Mr. Hamilton's plans. His energetic dictation, seconded by the zealous coöperation of his able friends in both houses of congress, naturally gave the lead to opinion. Where the passions of men are heated to the pitch of enthusiasm in any cause, he who advises the most positive measures is generally likely to gain the earliest hearing. Thus it happened in this case. The federal policy proposed and adopted at this session of congress was largely the offspring of Mr. Hamilton's brain, though it fell far short of the extent of his conceptions. Whether for weal or woe, it is his name that should be associated with it, and not that of the person then filling the executive chair, whose opinions it very partially represented, and whose legitimate influence it was designed to annihilate. Yet strange are sometimes the ways of Providence, which at one and the same moment will not simply expose one man to responsibility for the plans and actions of another, but will even make that other himself a medium through which the censure attending them shall be the most permanently visited on his memory.

The friends of Mr. Hamilton carried through congress some of the measures which had been proposed in the cabinet, and one or two that were not in that list. Without declaring war with France, they voted the treaties with her to be null and void, and authorized hostilities equivalent to war. They sanctioned a considerable augmentation of the actual army, with a prospective organization of officers adapted to a much more extended one, in case of invasion. They increased the navy by directing the construction or purchase of new ships, and they placed the superintendence of it in a distinct department of the government, over which they established a new cabinet officer. With the exception of this last change, all these things had been under the consideration of the executive department. The case was different with some other measures, and particularly those acts which have ever since been known

under the name of the Alien and Sedition Laws; acts, borrowed from the extravagant apprehensions entertained in Great Britain of the spread of the revolutionary spirit, which proved of no practical value whatever to America, whilst they furnished an effective handle for attack against their authors. Lastly, congress enlarged the objects of taxation, and gave the necessary powers to obtain by loan a further sum of five millions of dollars. As has been said already, this was not all of the system of Mr. Hamilton, for that contemplated an offensive war, sustained by the ultimate establishment of a military organization of fifty thousand men; but it was in its principal features in unison with his views. To Mr. Adams, who seems scarcely to have been consulted by the active men, no part of it was particularly acceptable excepting that which organized the navy. His system was purely defensive, and his preference would have been to strengthen that arm as the main reliance in warfare, whilst the army should be only a means of deterring the enemy from the idea of invasion. Here is the origin of the difference of opinion in the federal party which in a short time led to the most important consequences.

And, indeed, if the reasons urged in favor of a great prospective army be calmly examined, they seem scarcely strong enough to justify the erection of so ponderous a system. The ostensible motive was the apprehension of invasion by France. But at that time France had not an inch of territory on the American continent. She was, moreover, deeply involved in hostilities with Great Britain and other powers, which tasked her strength quite severely enough in Europe. What was then the prospect of her inclination or ability to dispatch large armies to the United States, whilst so many fields of brilliant conquest remained unreaped close under her hand? Neither had she, in point of fact, shown by any act of hers the remotest disposition towards an expedition of any sort. The naval preponderance of her island neighbor presented too formidable an obstacle, even if there had been no other. So long as the danger apprehended was only contingent, it seemed to require no more than a provisional extension of the established force, to be resorted to when necessary, and to be discontinued with the cessation of the necessity. But the plan of Mr Hamilton was not limited to this. It had every aspect of a solid establish-

ment, of greater or less extent, it might be, but of permanent duration. It very clearly contemplated other contingencies than that which was immediately before the public, and prepared for a different class of necessities. What the precise nature of them was, has never been fully laid open. But as some notion of them is of the very first necessity to a true conception of the difficulties of Mr. Adams in his Presidency, an attempt will now be made, from the materials which have found their way to the light within the last few years, to furnish such an explanation as they appear to justify.

It may be recollected that in the elaborate plan presented by Mr. McHenry, which has been already described, the herald of that part of Mr. Hamilton's system which appeared afterwards in congress, some stress was laid on another measure not proposed in that body. This was, the expediency of sounding Great Britain, touching a loan of ten of her ships of the line, and what was called a *coöperation*, in case of rupture, for the conquest of the Floridas, Louisiana, and the South American possessions of Spain. But inasmuch as Spain had not at this time made herself a stumbling-block of offence, it seems as if no special occasion had occurred for contemplating a plan to attack her American possessions, especially in conjunction with Great Britain, at the very time when the quarrel of the United States was only with France, and the way of providing for that was the single topic proposed for consideration. The mystery is not explicable unless the clue can be supplied from elsewhere. It can only be accounted for by knowing the fact that at this very time Mr. Hamilton had become a party to a grand project of revolution in South America, conceived years before in the fertile brain of Francisco de Miranda, but now taking the form of a political combination, the details of which are found singularly to correspond with this feature of the plan submitted to the President by Mr. McHenry.[1] At the date of McHenry's paper, Miranda was in London, anxiously awaiting the decision of the prime minister, Mr. Pitt, upon the extent to which Great Britain would undertake to assist him. And he had the best reasons for believing that that minister's favorable answer depended upon the prospect of coöperation held out by the Amer-

[1] The original project, signed by persons calling themselves deputies of South America, will be found in full in the Appendix to the present volume (G.)

ican government. According to Miranda's plan, Great Britain was to supply ships not exceeding twenty, money and men, but the United States were to furnish not less than seven thousand men, two thousand to be cavalry, and that not at first only, but throughout the war that might ensue, no matter how long. As a compensation for this engagement, the allotment of conquered territory, in case of success, was that which was pointed out in Mr. McHenry's paper, and perhaps the West Indies besides, excepting only Cuba. It is therefore difficult to resist the conviction that the same person who drew the plan offered to Mr. Adams, was at the time fully apprised of Miranda's projects, and was desirous so to shape the policy of the American government as to bring it into coöperation with them. For the rest, these facts are certain; that Mr. Hamilton was, during this period, in confidential communication with Miranda; that he suggested a change of the scheme, so far as to supply all the troops from the United States, instead of a part, which was accepted; and that the command of the troops so supplied had been conceded to his wishes.[1] Possessed of the knowledge of all these facts, it becomes easy to understand the reasons for an organization of the military force more extensive than would be needed merely for defence. That Mr. Hamilton contemplated heading an expedition to act for a greater or less period outside of the limits of the Union, and against the possessions of another nation than France, is beyond the possibility of doubt.[2] It was, therefore, very natural that he should be active to promote the establishment of a larger force than would appear necessary to those who had not been let into the secret of the uses to which a part of it was to be put.

Neither is this the only or the most serious consideration attending this remarkable project. The proposed coöperation with Great Britain, at a moment when she was deeply engaged

[1] "*Vos souhaits sont remplis.*" So says Miranda to Hamilton, in his letter of the 19th of October. *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xiii. p. 291. Mr. Hamilton explains them for himself in his letter to Rufus King. *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 347.

[2] After describing the extent of the military supplies to be provided, Mr. Hamilton writes to his friend, General Gunn, of Georgia: "This, you perceive, looks to offensive operations. If we are to engage in war, our game will be to attack where we can. France is not to be considered as separated from her ally. *Tempting objects will be within our grasp.*" *Works*, vol. v. p. 184.

in a war with the French, by a joint attack upon the dependencies of a power in close alliance with them, could scarcely fail to involve the most momentous results to the futurity of the United States. It was, first of all, about to render them dependent upon Great Britain for ships and money, to execute the object immediately in view. But granting that this could be gained at once, and with a small expenditure of the joint resources of the two nations, a thing by no means certain, the long train of consequences which victory involved, only then begins to be perceptible. The regions of South America, which were thus to be torn away from the control of Spain, were to be established as independent "under a moderate government, *with the joint guarantee of the coöperating powers*, stipulating equal privileges in commerce."[1] Such is the language used by Mr. Hamilton himself. But a joint guarantee, given in time of war, to the dependencies of one of the belligerent nations, to secure, against its consent, certain terms to them at all events, could not have been maintained without converting all those engaged into parties to the war, so long as it should last, and until the restoration of peace by some new form of negotiation. The effect of such a necessity could not fail to be a drawing closer of the alliance of the coöperating powers, and an entanglement in all the fortunes of the general struggle. An alliance was assumed to be inevitable in the South American project. It is not to be doubted that, though not advocated at the outset, it was distinctly contemplated by Mr. Hamilton, as an ultimate consequence of the execution of that scheme. But it is obvious that such an event could not have taken place without a complete abandonment of the neutrality which had been declared a cardinal point of the federal policy under General Washington's administration.

But apart from all views of foreign service, temporary or permanent, for the contemplated army, there were considerations growing out of the state of things at home, which greatly weighed on the mind of Mr. Hamilton to make him favor a

[1] Hamilton to King, *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 347. This letter is deserving of the closest attention by all who desire to understand the history of this period. Mr. King's public and private papers, not yet before the world, must throw a flood of light on these transactions. See also Hamilton to Miranda, in the same volume, p. 348.

permanent military organization. His tendencies were never to popular ideas. At the outset of the Revolution, even the fresh enthusiasm of his youth had much of early bias to struggle with before adopting the American cause.[1] Neither by birth, education, taste nor habits of life entertaining faith in theoretical democracy, his later observation had only confirmed his profound distrust of every thing which savored of the profession of it. His honorable and successful labors to effect the establishment of the federal constitution, were guided not so much by his confidence in the intrinsic excellence of that instrument, as by his anxiety to escape the danger of something worse. And his confidence in the permanency of that, never great, had been seriously impaired by the trials to which it had been subjected, and by the visible accumulation of elements regarded by him as sooner or later threatening its subversion. To his mind, the future presented, as he grew older, no other vision than that of a great crisis,[2] threatening the very foundations of the social system, from which there could be no escape, and which it was important to be in the best situation to meet. Confident of his own powers, he very naturally looked within himself for the agency adequate to cope with the danger. And foreseeing that this danger would inevitably entail civil commotion, he found it not difficult to convince himself that to his genius was allotted the control of the physical means necessary to restore order out of chaos. The first and most immediate duty was to be in a condition to act with effect in defence of the government.[3] And if this could not be done without resort to force, force must be at hand to use whenever the occasion should require it. Neither was his system one of aspirations purely selfish. Strong minds seldom fail to associate with dreams of their own glory the modes of exercising

[1] This is stated by himself, in the advertisement prefixed to his early pamphlet in answer to Wilkins, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 38.

[2] The expectation of a great crisis haunted his mind during several of his last years. See the *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, vol. iii. p. 217. Also the *Works of Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 281.

[3] See the letter of Hamilton to Rufus King, *Works*, vol. vi. p. 416. See also a significant intimation in General Harper's letter to Hamilton, *Works*, vol. vi. p. 282. Also the allusion to "the possibility of internal disorders" in Hamilton to Otis, *Works*, vol. vi. p. 380, Hamilton to Dayton, *ib.* p. 384.

Of Mr. Ames's sympathizing opinion there can be no doubt. See his letter to Wolcott, *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 320. "I would have in preparation the force to decide the issue in favor of government."

power for the good of their fellow-men. Considering their happiness as mainly dependent upon a sense of security from domestic convulsions, his first aim would have been to gain that end at any rate, even should it be done at some expense of their liberties. But, this fundamental point once well settled, those liberties might be freely enjoyed up to the very limits of that necessity.

This seems to be somewhat the transcript of the mind of Hamilton during the last years of his life, as it can be gathered from a close observation of his principles, his language, and his action. He had been some time waiting for the occasion that might call out the capacities which he felt that he possessed. His great aspiration was for military lead. And it is by no means unlikely that in this estimate of his powers he was not mistaken. Some of the elements that insure command he certainly had. The time had now arrived when the field was opening to him abroad as well as at home. Hence his earnest advocacy of a permanent army as a consequence of the difficulty that had occurred with France. Hence his still more earnest labors to pave the way to the command of that army for himself.

An army was raised — not such as he had contemplated, but enough to begin with. The next point was the command; and the nomination to that was vested in the President. Nothing but an extraordinary stretch of his favor could bring Mr. Hamilton within reach of it, for, in point of rank and former services, his claims fell far below those of many prominent officers of the Revolution still on the stage. But of the favor of Mr. Adams, at least to so great an extent as was now required, Mr. Hamilton had his own reasons to feel very uncertain.[1] Not oblivious of the secret efforts to set him aside at the time of his election, and too proud to run the risk of a refusal, he addressed himself to the task of attaining his end through an intermediate agency. This was by appealing to a power, with whose wishes, if once expressed, the President would deem it too dangerous to contend. Such a power existed in the person of General Washington, to whom the whole country looked as the individual to be called to the chief command, in case of

[1] Hamilton to Pickering, in *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 355.

exigency. And Mr. Hamilton too well knew the confidence entertained in his abilities by Washington, not to be sure that he should himself be relied upon as one of his most useful assistants. So far every thing turned out according to his expectation. The President nominated Washington to be Lieutenant-general of the forces. And the latter accepted, but not without adding two conditions; one, that he should not be called into active service until it should be indispensable; the other, that he should have the right of selecting the officers of his staff. In anticipation of the second condition, Mr. Hamilton had already opened the way to consultations with Washington, and had pointed out the only post in which he would consent to serve. It was that of inspector-general, with the rank of a major-general. These demands were readily assented to on all sides, and the lists of the organization were accordingly made out.

But although things had thus far gone according to expectation, the most important point, the designation of the second in command, had not yet been settled, or, if to be so regarded, it had not been settled auspiciously to the hopes of Mr. Hamilton. In the list of officers of the second rank, presented by Washington, nominated by the President, and ratified by the Senate, on the same day, were three names, Hamilton, Knox, C. C. Pinckney. The question of priority among them had not been started, even though Mr. Pickering and Mr. McHenry directly, and Mr. Hamilton indirectly, had invoked the interposition of Washington to determine it at once. Such a decision involved considerations of delicacy towards the other two officers, which neither the President nor General Washington felt at liberty to overlook. According to all received ideas, the elevation of Hamilton could not be regarded otherwise than as offensive to them. Knox and Pinckney were both greatly his seniors in the revolutionary army. The former had been at the head of the department of war both before and after the adoption of the constitution. The latter was a brigadier-general in 1783. If the law established in the Revolution were to be regarded as unrepealed, both would be entitled to the precedence as a matter of course. Mr. Adams saw no occasion to justify his going out of the path to set it aside. General Washington, for reasons having a particular relation to the

quarter in which attack was most apprehended, inclined to prefer Mr. Pinckney. And, though partial to Hamilton, he was very reluctant to wound the feelings of General Knox.

In the midst of these doubts, Mr. Pickering and Mr. McHenry, in conjunction with other friends of Mr. Hamilton, set in motion the most extraordinary influences to bring about the result they desired. To General Washington, in retirement at Mount Vernon, they represented that the federalists in congress and in the country demanded the elevation of Hamilton. To the Senate, at Philadelphia, they urged that this was the cherished wish of Washington. These movements were successful so far as to make the accidental order of the names, as ratified, appear to convey an intention to determine the rank; but this was not enough of itself to counteract the legal force of the precedents setting the other way. Some direct act of the President would be necessary, after all, or the design would fail of accomplishment. It was at last obtained, by operating upon the strong prejudices of General Washington. In the casual conversations in the cabinet upon the organization of the army, Mr. Adams had let drop some intimations of a wish to give a share of the commissions to leading military men of the opposition. Among the names mentioned by him of suitable persons, were those of Aaron Burr, and Peter Muhlenberg, of Pennsylvania. Knowing the strong dislike of the first entertained by Washington, intimations were soon given to him of the tendencies of the President, and of the possibility that he might, if he did not anticipate the danger by a firm demand of the list of nominations exactly in the order presented by himself, be liable to have Burr forced upon him as quartermaster-general, or in some other confidential post.[1] These representations wrought upon Washington so far as to bring forth the desired peremptory request, attended with a menace of resignation in failure of immediate compliance, an act so little in consonance with the general spirit of Washington's life and relations to the President, as at once to imply the existence of some unusual influence to produce it. The contrivers of this measure were not mistaken in their calculations of its success. Mr.

[1] This is plainly hinted at in a note from Pickering to Wolcott, *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 71. Mr. Adams has himself explained it more fully in his letters to James Lloyd, in the 10th volume of this work.

Adams gave way. He referred the decision to the pleasure of General Washington, who promoted Hamilton. General Knox refused to accept his commission in consequence. General Pinckney, on the contrary, acquiesced.

Every thing seemed at last to settle down according to the wishes of the cabinet. The first actual conflict between them and their nominal chief had ended in their triumph. They began to think their power established. Washington's place, they foresaw, would be but a pageant; and that the virtual command of the new army, carrying with it the direction, in conjunction with them, of the future policy of the nation, would henceforth centre in the hands of their real leader, Alexander Hamilton. It was, indeed, a great victory; but it was of that class which is the forerunner of greater defeats. Mr. Adams opened his eyes to the nature of the situation to which it was about to reduce him. He keenly felt the circumstances of *duresse* under which this result had been brought upon him, and he foresaw, in the motives that prompted the act, that it was only a prelude to worse things. From this time may be dated the beginning of his distrust of his ministers and of his determination to resist their control.

Whilst these things were passing in the interior of the cabinet, Mr. Adams, with the earnest eloquence of his nature, was responding to innumerable addresses poured in upon him from all quarters of the land, and, in his turn, animating his countrymen to stand by their rulers in the trial to which the follies of a foreign government were subjecting them. The effect of the grand burst of enthusiasm that had been elicited, lost none of its imposing character in the distance at which it was seen from the other side of the ocean. The Directory perceived that a mistake had been made, which had had the effect of exposing them to ridicule in Europe, and of annihilating their influence in America. They at once disavowed the agents who had appeared so industrious to effect their designs upon the pockets of the nation, by working on the fears of the commissioners, and quietly set in motion new means of recovering lost ground. The evidences of this change in their policy reached the President long after he had retired for the summer to his farm at Quincy. The gradual effect which the reception of them, from time to time, produced upon his mind,

it is of the utmost importance to a clear knowledge of the subsequent events, to trace with some minuteness.

It was one of the most gloomy seasons in Mr. Adams's life. His house was not, as he had generally known it, a refuge from harassing cares, a resource against public anxieties, a fountain at once of vivacity and of affectionate sympathy, a treasury of judicious and faithful counsels. Mrs. Adams lay stretched on the bed of illness, for a long time flickering between life and death; and even when issuing from the trial, but slowly dispelling the uneasiness her frail condition could not but awaken. In the midst of his domestic sadness came up the serious consideration of his public situation. For the first time, in connection with the movements of Mr. Hamilton and his friends, he now understood the dangers which impended over him. Although not by any means acquainted with the whole truth, he saw enough to understand the nature of the expedients resorted to for the purpose of controlling his will. He had had more than one occasion to feel that his cabinet officers were effective instruments to this end, and that he could place little reliance upon them for the execution of his own wishes. Yet he was to be exposed to the world and to posterity as the responsible instrument to execute a policy, in framing which no discretion was to be allowed him. Already the outline, so far as it had been developed, alarmed him. It involved demands on the public purse which he saw no means of supplying, without risk of convulsions, and the establishment of a permanent military organization, the necessity for which he could not understand. Above all, his instincts warned him, in no dubious tones, that the extraordinary management resorted to for the purpose of placing Mr. Hamilton at the head of this great power, was designed certainly to give to him, and in certain contingencies, perhaps, to the country itself, A MASTER.

Whilst agitated by these doubts, letters from Francisco de Miranda arrived. They were skilfully drawn to have an effect. They set forth the project, which had been listened to by Great Britain, and solicited the coöperation of the American government in its execution. They held out the idea, not likely to be inoperative on the supposed weak points of Mr. Adams, that the institutions to be given to the South American States, in case of success, were to be formed after the model which he

had labored so strenuously in his writings to recommend. And they closed by representing the arrangements to be now so far perfected, that upon his answer to the present application would the execution depend. Of the deep and intimate connection of this scheme with the system of Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Adams then had no suspicion. He knew, indeed, that by the same channel which conveyed this dispatch, letters had been received both by Generals Hamilton and Knox; but he had no idea of the extent to which they might be enlisted in carrying it out. There can now be no doubt that Colonel Pickering, Mr. Wolcott, and Mr. McHenry knew more about it than they cared to disclose; and that the main features of the plan were familiar to Mr. Hamilton's friends in both houses of congress. Why was it that, under these circumstances, this important operation had no issue? The answer is to be found in the situation of Mr. Adams. No one of the parties engaged was willing to take the risk of communicating to him the whole truth. Under these circumstances, he acted upon the application in the most simple and summary way possible. "We are friends with Spain," said he, in a letter to the Secretary of State. "If we were enemies, would the project be useful to us? It will not be in character for me to answer the letter. Will any notice of it, in any manner, be proper?" The Secretary never ventured to answer the questions; and the grand plan thus perished by inanition. Indeed, other events were approaching which soon put all notion of prosecuting it with the consent of Mr. Adams entirely out of the question.

On the 1st of October, 1798, Elbridge Gerry arrived in Boston, on his return from the unfortunate mission to France. Although by no means satisfied with the course which he had thought it proper to take, in remaining after his colleagues left Paris, Mr. Adams had in no degree suffered his confidence in the integrity of his old friend to be impaired. He therefore welcomed him home as cordially as ever, and showed himself prepared to listen with a favoring ear to any arguments he might have to offer in his justification. It proved the less difficult for Mr. Gerry to relieve himself from censure that he was able to communicate to him good reasons for believing that his stay had not been without its measure of utility. He narrated the last movements of Talleyrand, his earnestness to

retain him for the sake of commencing a negotiation, and his professions of regret at his determination to depart, all furnishing to him symptoms of a softening on the part of the French Directory, and of a wish, at least in part, to retrace their steps.[1] These communications were received by the President in a friendly spirit to the maker, but with a very natural distrust of the grounds upon which they had been based.[2]

Not a week elapsed, however, before intelligence came from a new and a wholly different quarter, to make upon him a deeper and much more abiding impression. This was received from Mr. Murray, the minister of the United States in Holland.[3] It disclosed clearly enough the uneasiness of France at the danger of an approximation of her opponents in other countries towards Great Britain, her most formidable enemy. Here was visible a new motive for the sudden change of intentions which Mr. Gerry thought he had perceived before his departure, and a sufficient reason for waiting to learn more. These dispatches of Mr. Murray, though sent through the Department of State, were not to be deposited there, as they involved the names and characters of persons in Holland, whose safety might be seriously implicated by exposure. This is a material fact in the narrative, and its bearing will appear presently. The contents of them were, however, well known to Colonel Pickering, and perhaps to other members of the cabinet.

Revolving these various communications in his mind during his retirement at Quincy, Mr. Adams could not resist the belief that a possibility yet existed of averting the calamity of war. In this spirit, he addressed a letter, on the 20th of October,[4] to Colonel Pickering, the Secretary of State. Reminding him of the approach of the session of congress, he proceeded to lay before him some thoughts which, in his opinion, deserved to be maturely considered, and upon which he requested early efforts to obtain the advice of the other cabinet officers. They were comprised in two propositions, as follows: —

[1] It is to be observed that Rufus King, then minister in London, in two letters, a week apart, announced to Mr. Hamilton this change in the French policy as certain. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. pp. 357, 359.

[2] This must have been in the first week of October.

[3] This was on the 9th of October. Vol. viii. Appendix (A.) pp. 677–684. The dispatches were sent to Philadelphia, as a portion was to be deciphered, and returned on the 18th, in season to produce the letter of the 20th.

[4] *Works*, vol. viii. p. 609.

The first, whether it would be expedient for the President to recommend a declaration of war.

The second, whether any further proposals of negotiation could be made with safety, or *any new envoy named*, prepared to embark, *in case assurances should be given that he would be received.*

The symptoms of hesitation, visible in the second question, and still more so in the reasoning of the letter, seem to have burst like a clap of thunder over the heads of the cabinet officers. No answer to either question, or sign of recognition of its existence, was ever returned. The experiment of overruling the President, which had succeeded so well in the case of Mr. Hamilton, was now changed into a fixed policy. Of their system, war was an essential part. In his message to congress of the 21st of June, Mr. Adams had pledged himself "that he would never send another minister to France, without assurances that he would be received." To that pledge, in its most rigid sense, they resolved to hold him; and, warned by this signal, they set themselves at once to prepare such a form of words for his adoption at the opening of the session, as should leave him no loophole for retreat. Some of them had fixed their minds on a declaration of war. To act with more force, they called together a council of their leading friends, including the military generals happening to be assembled at Philadelphia, Washington,[1] Hamilton, and Pinckney, where they matured the language of a draft intended for the use of Mr. Adams in his opening speech, the duty of offering which was devolved upon the person then supposed to be personally most agreeable to him, Mr. Oliver Wolcott.

There is no reason to suppose that when Mr. Adams arrived[2] at Philadelphia in the last days of November, 1798, he had the smallest suspicion of what was awaiting him, or of the severity of the trial to which his firmness was to be put. He had seen in the newspapers, on his way, indications of a disposition

[1] There is no evidence yet before the world, that General Washington actually took part in the consultation.

[2] In writing to his wife, on his arrival, he says: "For once I have accomplished a journey from Quincy to High Street without one escorting man or horse. This was done by invention, as I will explain some other time." Yet this was the person charged by his opponents with a great fondness for forms and ceremonies.

in some quarters to push for a declaration of war, but he had not regarded them as proving any settled purpose. In this spirit he met the members of his cabinet. The two questions presented in his letter of the 20th of October, of which no notice had been taken, were now formally brought forward by him. No one ventured to suggest an immediate declaration of war, as the President not only did not propose it, but his opinion was clearly seen to be adverse; some of the members were themselves not ready for it; so it was tacitly agreed to leave all notice of the subject out of the speech. The great struggle was upon the other question; to wit, whether any circumstances would justify a renewal of negotiations by the United States. Mr. Adams leaned to the affirmative. He required, however, the manifestation of the strongest evidence of sincerity on the part of France as a preliminary condition. The paragraph which he prepared, expressive of his sentiment, yet remains among his papers.[1] Whether it was offered at this cabinet meeting is not positively known, though altogether probable. There is evidence that the Secretary of State, at least, had had it communicated to him. It explicitly declared the President's disposition to send a minister to France or to receive one from there, whenever the assurances required in his former message of the 21st of June should be forthcoming. If it was submitted at this meeting, the fact that it was not adopted, shows that there was no inclination in the President to be tenacious about terms. On the other hand, the draft which had been prepared in the council already mentioned, and presented by Mr. Wolcott for his acceptance, proved generally satisfactory to him. He concurred in its recommendations, and consented to adopt it, but with the exception of a single passage, to the language of which he demurred. That passage stood thus: —

"In demonstrating by our conduct that we do not fear war in the necessary protection of our rights and honor, we shall give no room to infer that we abandon the desire of peace. This has been wisely and perseveringly cultivated, and as between us and France, harmony may be reëstablished at her option.

"*But the sending another minister to make a new attempt at*

[1] It is printed in a note to the passage of the speech of which it was intended to make a part. Vol. ix. p. 131.

negotiation would, in my opinion,[1] *be an act of humiliation to which the United States ought not to submit without extreme necessity. No such necessity exists.* It must, therefore, be left with France, if she be indeed desirous of accommodation, to take the requisite steps. The United States adhere to the maxims by which they have been governed. They will sacredly respect the rights of embassy. Their magnanimity discards the policy of retaliating insult in bar of the avenues to peace, *and if France shall send a minister to negotiate, he will be received with honor and treated with candor.*"

The purport of this language could not be mistaken. It was intended to put an opinion in the mouth of the President which would cut him off from the possibility of initiating a mission, no matter what might be the change of disposition in France. And it proposed to require the government of that country to originate the measure, which there was very little probability that it would do, in the attitude in which it then stood towards Europe. It was the United States who were mainly suffering by the continuance of the misunderstanding. Their commerce was the prey of France, who, in return, had no assailable equivalent exposed to reprisal. To require such a condition, was therefore little short of insisting upon an indefinite duration of their own grievances, and a war on a mere point of form into the bargain. The President declined to commit himself to any such extent. The first open struggle of his administration took place. His advisers insisted upon the adoption of the passage, some of them with great warmth and pertinacity. This moment was to decide whether Mr. Adams was yet to stand in history the same man who had determined to defend Captain Preston, the same man who had been avoided in the streets of Philadelphia for urging independence, the same man who in Holland and in France had set aside the dictation of Count de Vergennes, or a mere cipher in the most critical period and the most responsible position known in the annals of the nation. The course he took may be readily conjectured, if this narrative thus far has been anywise successful in tracing the outlines of his character. He persevered in requiring a modification, small in extent, it is

[1] These three material words are not found in the draft printed in Mr. Gibbs's *Work*.

true, but significant enough to answer the purpose. His version, as it stands in the speech actually pronounced, reads as follows: —

"But in demonstrating by our conduct that we do not fear war in the necessary protection of our rights and honor, we shall give no room to infer that we abandon the desire of peace. An efficient preparation for war can alone insure peace. It is peace that we have uniformly and perseveringly cultivated; and harmony between us and France may be restored at her option. But to send another minister without more determinate assurances that he would be received, would be an act of humiliation to which the United States ought not to submit. It must, therefore, be left to France, if she is indeed desirous of accommodation, to take the requisite steps.

"The United States will steadily observe the maxims by which they have hitherto been governed. They will respect the sacred rights of embassy. And with a sincere disposition on the part of France to desist from hostility, to make reparation for the injuries heretofore inflicted on our commerce, and to do justice in future, there will be no obstacle to the restoration of a friendly intercourse. In making to you this declaration, I give a pledge to France and to the world that the executive authority of this country still adheres to the humane and pacific policy which has invariably governed its proceedings, in conformity with the wishes of the other branches of the government, and of the people of the United States. But considering the late manifestations of her policy towards foreign nations, I deem it a duty deliberately and solemnly to declare my opinion, that, whether we negotiate with her or not, vigorous preparations for war will be alike indispensable. These alone will give us an equal treaty and insure its observance."

A comparison of the two passages will show the significance of Mr. Adams's alteration to consist more in what he expunges than what he inserts. The clause, exacting from France the initiation of a new mission as a preliminary step to peace, wholly disappears, and there remains only a requirement of acts to prove a pacific disposition, the withdrawal of hostility, and the readiness to do justice both for the past and for the future. Negotiation was therefore made to depend upon the actual return of good faith in France, and not upon any particular

mode of showing it. And although preparation for war was still strenuously insisted upon, the duration of it was made contingent only upon her persistence in refusing the most equitable propositions. Unobjectionable as this statement of a national position seems to the eye of reason and of Christian charity, it was received by the cabinet officers with the most gloomy forebodings. Mournfully did they retire from the conference, under a conviction that their plan had failed, and that their official, meant to be likewise their real President, after all.

The speech was made to congress on the 8th of December, 1798, in presence of Generals Washington, Hamilton, and Pinckney, then assembled at Philadelphia for the work of organizing the army, and of all the principal officers of the government. It was brief and manly in its terms, reviewing the state of the relations with the powers of Europe, and inculcating the necessity of energy and union under the embarrassments with which the nation had to contend. The only important recommendation was one touching the extension of the navy. This, which was Mr. Adams's favorite policy, he proposed to develop to a size sufficient to guard the coast, and protect the trade of the country, as well as to facilitate the safe transportation of troops and stores from any one point of the seaboard to every other. Upon this issue, the opposition chose to take the broadest ground of resistance; so that the navy became one of the chief topics of dissension during this administration. And here, Mr. Adams's individual opinions were in perfect harmony with all sections of the party he represented.

But in other points, where no such agreement existed, the failure to control the executive in regard to the possible renewal of negotiations with France, precipitated matters to an issue. No longer sure of overbearing Mr. Adams, through his cabinet, the friends of Mr. Hamilton immediately turned their eyes to congress, in the expectation that an appeal to them might avail, and that a majority could be persuaded to dictate to him their policy as the sentiment of the whole party. A meeting was accordingly summoned; and the members, now largely preponderating in both Houses, very generally attended it. Here the expediency of making a declaration of war was urged, and warmly and perseveringly pressed. But although many of the most brilliant orators appeared to favor it, their eloquence could

not avail to effect the object. A small majority decided the point against them. The result was defeat; and a consciousness on the part of Mr. Hamilton's adherents, that, from this time, they must consider themselves as not possessed of the ascendant in the party counsels, and that the future course was not to be one exclusively of their suggesting.[1]

Of course it followed, according to all recognized notions in political associations, that the minority, having been fairly outvoted, was bound to do one of two things, either to acquiesce or to secede. And if the case was not deemed important enough to justify the latter step, then it was no more than just to adopt the former cheerfully. Since war was put out of the question, it seemed the part of wisdom to unite, so far as practicable, in the intermediate policy. To this, however, the friends of Mr. Hamilton manifested but little inclination. On the contrary, their failure was rather the signal for laying aside further reserve towards him whom they considered as the cause of it. In this course the Secretary of State took the lead. Far from respecting the confidential nature of his post, he had never hesitated, when he pleased, to exert his influence secretly to counteract the President's wishes. This had been strikingly exemplified in the case of Colonel William Stephens Smith, Mr. Adams's son-in-law, whom General Washington had placed in his list of general officers, and whom the President had nominated to the Senate for an appointment. Taking advantage of his confidential knowledge of the President's intention, Colonel Pickering hastened to the Senate, privately to rouse, in advance, the necessary opposition to defeat it. The same vindictiveness was repeated at a later period, without, however, being then attended with the same success. It now flamed forth, in a vehement manner, against Mr. Elbridge Gerry.[2] Not satisfied with preparing an official report upon his dispatches, so harsh in its character as to call forth the positive interposition of Mr. Adams requiring a modification of its language, he extended his annoyance to the point of disputing the petty

[1] Not only the fact that a party urged a declaration of war at this time is conceded, but the propriety of it is maintained and defended, in Mr. Gibbs's *Work*, vol. ii. pp. 216–217. The issue is, therefore, clearly made up on this point.

[2] Mr. Hamilton has left on record his warning to General Washington of the necessity of keeping a check on Colonel Pickering. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. pp. 162-163.

items of his pecuniary accounts. Towards Mr. Adams himself he continued only the forms of civility, which did not restrain him from disregarding his wishes, neglecting his injunctions, and, among his circle of intimates, disparaging both his acts and his conversation. Thus it was that, when officially requested, on the 15th of January, 1799, to prepare the draft of a project of a treaty and a consular convention, such as the United States might accept, if proposed by France, Colonel Pickering seems to have passed it over without notice. Thus it was that the reflections in his report, bearing upon Mr. Gerry, were not modified without a stubborn resistance. The same state of things, though in a far less degree, prevailed in Mr. Adams's relations with the secretaries of the treasury and of war. His familiar talk, never sufficiently guarded, was watched only to be reported for the purpose of fastening inconsistency upon his public action. His wishes were liable to become known abroad, and neutralized by anticipation, if never openly resisted in words. Mutual confidence could not long survive such a state of things. Although not fully alive to the extent of the combination in his cabinet with a power outside of it, such as it has been but very lately disclosed, he yet instinctively felt that he was no longer among friends. Hence that, if any public act should be absolutely demanded on his part, the execution of it would depend only upon the degree in which he could make his unaided individual energies overbear all opposition.

It has been remarked that the policy of the federalists of the Hamilton school was war; that of a portion of them, aggressive war. The motives to it were twofold. 1. The preponderance which an appeal to the patriotic feeling of the people was giving to the party. 2. The great military organization which it was throwing into their hands. With the aid of these forces, they trusted to procure modifications in the laws, and even in the constitution itself,[1] so to fortify their position in the government as in time to render it inex-

[1] This seems the unavoidable construction to be put upon the language of Mr. Hamilton, when he speaks of "surrounding the constitution with more ramparts," and of "the erection of additional buttresses to the constitution, a fabric which can hardly be stationary, and which will retrograde, if it cannot be made to advance." *Works*, vol. vi. pp. 384, 416.

pugnable by the opposition. A calm examination of this whole theory, and a comparison of it with the temper of the American people, can scarcely fail at this day to convince any one how visionary, not to say indiscreet, such ideas really were. They were never even remotely shared by Mr. Adams. He roused the country to war, solely as a measure of defence, and to deter France from further persevering in her aggressions. The first appearance of relaxation on her part, far from being hailed by him with misgivings and aversion, was watched with interest, though naturally not unmingled with distrust. At the opening of the session, nothing had occurred to justify in his mind any change of his position taken in June preceding. On the other hand, enough had appeared to forbid the propriety of going one step further, and cutting off even a chance of reconciliation.

In this state things remained during a considerable portion of the session of 1798–1799. Mr. Adams, in the mean time, continued to receive communications of a very interesting nature from Mr. Murray, all of them tending to prove a real change in the French policy. On the 21st of January, the terms of the Directory's answer to the Dutch offer of mediation reached his hands. They declared that the disposition of the French to reconciliation had been already unmistakably made known at Philadelphia, and they imposed upon the government of the United States the responsibility of the consequences, if it should persist in misconstruing or repulsing it. This paper, decisive enough, had it emanated from any government of unimpaired character, was yet worthy of some consideration, if viewed simply as a stroke of crafty diplomacy. It threw the burden of perpetuating a quarrel from the French upon the American side. Nothing sustained the administration of Mr. Adams so firmly as the popular conviction that the blame lay wholly with France, and that no measures of hostility had been resorted to until every hope of peace had been exhausted. The knowledge that France had made specific offers to modify her offensive policy, and that the offers had met with no attention, would soon be spread abroad by her friends,[1] and would scarcely fail to renew the strength of opposition. These were strong

[1] The notes of M. Talleyrand to M. Pichon were actually printed in a newspaper in Virginia in the summer of 1799.

considerations for at least listening to the proposals. Yet they were not decisive; for they could not be said to contain such assurances as would warrant a departure from the memorable pledge given by the President in his message of the 21st of June.

Ten days later, however, something came of a much more positive character. A letter from Mr. Murray was received, in which he narrated the particulars of his interviews with M. Pichon, the French agent at the Hague, respecting the nature of the assurances required by the terms of that message. Difficulties of form were interposed. But they had been at last somewhat skilfully surmounted by the preparation, on the part of M. Talleyrand, of a dispatch, addressed to M. Pichon, in which, whilst reiterating the professions of a desire to come to a good understanding with America, he managed to introduce a promise, in the very words that had been used by the President, to wit, that a new envoy, if sent, would be "received as the representative of a great, free, powerful, and independent nation." This dispatch, thus prepared, was placed in the hands of M. Pichon to be by him delivered to Mr. Murray, and by him, in turn, transmitted to the government of the United States.

The receipt of this paper filled up the measure of Mr. Adams's responsibility to his country. The question, and an immensely important one, both to his fellow-citizens and to himself, was how it should be met. Should he refuse to do any thing? In that case the burden of all the evil consequences to the country would fall upon himself alone. He might have averted them, had he only acted. Such an idea would ever recur to poison the quiet of his remaining life, and to spoil the remembrance of past sacrifices and services. No! He could not stand still. Clearly, something was to be done.

Then the question followed, what he should do.

Should he call his cabinet into his consultation, and prepare them for the adoption of a new measure of negotiation?

If he did take this, which was obviously, under common circumstances, the proper course, there were strong grounds for believing that all his efforts would be defeated, and come to nothing. Of Colonel Pickering's views and feelings, even with the full knowledge of Mr. Murray's communications, he had

every reason to be sure beforehand. Experience had already warned him of the fate which the slightest intimation of an offer to revive a mission to France was likely to meet.[1] The presentation of it in the cabinet would lead to a warm protest, and to the necessity of either persevering against an opposition profiting of the tactics of delay to become concerted in the Senate, or of abandoning the measure altogether. Judging from subsequent events, there can be little doubt that in these views of probabilities Mr. Adams's foresight was correct. Party passions had reached such a height, that if he had pursued any ordinary course, it is nearly certain his decision would have been overruled, and his influence ever afterwards annihilated.

No greater trial has ever yet befallen a chief magistrate of the United States. None greater ever befell Mr. Adams, and yet this narrative has shown that he had not been without severe ones. But his convictions of duty were never more clear. War impended over the country, and a chance was yet left to avert it. He was bound not to permit that chance, however slight, to escape. He meditated the means in his own secret heart. There was but one way. He ought to send to the Senate a communication nominating a minister to go to France; and the person must be the individual through whom the overtures for accommodation had been transmitted, William Vans Murray, now minister at the Hague. On the 18th of February, accordingly, the members of the Senate, not one of whom had a suspicion of what was coming, were astounded by the reception of a message from the President, covering the dispatch of Talleyrand to M. Pichon, as the motive to his decision to nominate Mr. Murray. The terms used by him were most carefully guarded in every particular, assuming no risk in trusting too readily the professions of M. Talleyrand, and providing that no advance should be made beyond the appointment, until further assurances, the most unequivocal, should be publicly and officially given by France that the minister now nominated would be honorably received.

It would be difficult, were it within the proper limits of this

[1] Mr. Jefferson indeed reports one of the secretaries as saying that if the cabinet had been consulted, the advice would have been against the nomination. *Writings of Jefferson*, Washington's edit. vol. iv. p. 297. Although this is probable, Mr. Jefferson's statements respecting his opponents during this period must be taken with caution.

work, fully to describe the mixed and opposite emotions with which this proceeding was received by the members of the Senate. A large majority of them were now federalists, the greater part, devoted friends of Mr. Hamilton. But Mr. Jefferson, the chief of the opposition, was its presiding officer, and under him yet rallied the small band of his friends who had survived the political tornado of the preceding year. All were equally astonished. The letters of Mr. Murray to the President had been, for the sake of the persons compromised in Holland, kept within the knowledge of very few. And even some of those few had their own reasons for not aiding to give them publicity. They knew and feared the tendency of the President's mind, and had been endeavoring to counteract it by efforts to commit him, so far as they could, before the public, to their own views. Hence it happened that, in the absence of all acquaintance with the true grounds of the nomination, the wildest conjectures were let loose. "Is Mr. Adams mad?" asked a federal senator of Colonel Pickering, the Secretary of State, who affected greater ignorance than he really had. On the one hand, Mr. Jefferson, the Vice-President, was full of suspicions that the President had kept back Talleyrand's letter for months, in order to let the war measures go on; and that, finding himself compelled to disclose it at last, he had done so only to let the Senate reject it.[1] Whilst the Secretary of State, on the other, exultingly vindictive, informed General Washington, three days after the event, "that the President was suffering the torments of the damned at the consequences of his nomination."

By way of set-off against these opposite speculations, and to show how Mr. Adams actually felt, it may be as well here to introduce two private letters of his, written to his wife at the very time these gentlemen were penning their epistles. Intermixed with some comments upon matters of no public interest, are these remarks upon the memorable act.

22 February.

"I have no idea that I shall be chosen President a second time; though this is not to be talked of. The business of the

[1] Letter to Madison, 26 February, 1799, in *Washington's Edition*, vol. iv. p. 298. Mr. Jefferson's letters during this period scarcely do him credit.

office is so oppressive that I shall hardly support it two years longer.

"To-night I must go to the ball; where I suppose I shall get a cold, and have to eat gruel for breakfast for a week afterwards. This will be no punishment.

"Since my nomination of Murray I have been advised by some to name my son John and Mr. King, with Mr. Murray. But I answer that the nomination of either Mr. King or Mr. Adams would probably defeat the whole measure. Rivalries have been irritated to madness, and federalists have merited the Sedition Law, and Cobbet the Alien Bill. But I will not take revenge. I do not remember that I was ever vindictive in my life, though I have often been very wroth. I am not very angry now, nor much vexed or fretted. The mission came across the views of many, and stirred the passions of more. This I knew was unavoidable. The reasons which determined me are too long to be written."

Of his anxieties he writes in these words: —

"Your sickness last summer, fall, and winter has been to me the severest trial I ever endured. Not that I am at this moment without other trials, enough for one man. I may adopt the words of a celebrated statesman, whom, however, I should not wish to resemble in many things. 'And now, good judge,' says he, 'let me ask you, whether you believe that my situation in the world is perfectly as I could wish it; whether you imagine that I meet with no shock from my superiors, no perverseness from my equals, no impertinence from my inferiors. If you fancy me in such a state of bliss, you are wide from the mark!'"

The following thoughts were called out by private matters, but they equally elucidate the state of his mind.

"25 February.

"Frederick, Franklin, and other *soi-disant* philosophers insist that nature contrives these things, with others, to reconcile men to the thought of quitting the world. If my philosophy was theirs, I should believe that nature cared nothing for men, nor their follies, nor their miseries, nor for herself. She is a mighty

stupid wretch, according to them; a kind of French woman, sometimes beautiful and clever, but very often diabolical; a kind of French republic, cunning and terrible, but cruel as the grave, and unjust as the tempter and tormentor.

"I believe nothing like this of nature, which to me is a machine whose author and conductor is wise, kind, and mighty. Believing this, I can acquiesce in what is unpleasant, expecting that it will work out a greater degree of good. If it were possible that I should be mistaken, I at least shall not be worse off than these profound philosophers. I shall be in the same case hereafter, and a little, a great deal better here."

Among other modes of binding the President to a policy he was thought not to favor, one had been resorted to by the Secretary of State, which has already been mentioned in another connection. This was to draw up an official report, embracing a summary of the negotiations with France, into which the severe strictures upon the conduct of Mr. Gerry, that roused objections on the part of Mr. Adams, were introduced. The incidental matter had occupied so much of his attention, and the effort to modify it had become so exclusively an object, that he seems to have suffered the other portions of the document to pass almost without notice. Construing this as approbation of every thing that he did not censure, Colonel Pickering afterwards labored to fix upon Mr. Adams a charge of inconsistency between his action at that time and his nomination of Mr. Murray a month later. Feeble as the reasoning is, to justify so violent a presumption, the following letter, written at the moment, sufficiently disposes of it, by showing three things; first, that he saw no necessity for the paper at all; secondly, that his approbation of it, when prepared, was quite dubious even after the required changes had been made in it; and, lastly, that even that share which he gave, had been modified by the reception, soon afterwards, of evidence enfeebling its positions. Thus he deals with the subject, in the letter just quoted. Mrs. Adams had been quite sick.

"The report was not at last as it should have been. But it is very different from the report made to me. I scratched out, a little. I wanted no report. In short, it is one of those things that I may talk of when I see you. After I sent that report to

congress, I received a letter, which has favored Mr. Gerry's opinion and made against the report.

"I have instituted a new mission, which is kept in the dark, but when it comes to be understood, it will be approved. O! how they lament Mrs. Adams's absence! She is a good counsellor! If she had been here, Murray would never have been named, nor his mission instituted!

"This ought to gratify your vanity enough to cure you!"

These letters illustrate the difficulties under which Mr. Adams labored within his cabinet, in the effort to maintain his own views of policy and duty. The majority of the Senate was not disinclined to arrogate a share of control over him. After two days of delay, the nomination of Mr. Murray was referred to a committee of five persons, all of them federalists. Of this committee, Mr. Theodore Sedgwick was chairman, who had already sent off to Mr. Hamilton a request for instructions what to do. In the mean time its members determined on the extraordinary step of personally visiting the President, to learn the reasons, if he had any, for the measure, and to obtain alterations equivalent to an entire abandonment of it. Such was the temper of the impetuous class. Perpetually indulging the hope of overruling the judgment of their chief, they fancied that a display of senatorial authority might be sufficiently imposing to prompt a voluntary withdrawal of his act, and save them the necessity of voting upon it. The chief agent, who records this, was likewise the person who but eight years before had warmly commended, for his "unconquerable intrepidity," the very man upon whom he was about to try this crucial experiment.

Mr. Adams met this proceeding with far more moderation than it merited.[1] He very properly protested against it as an attempt to dictate to a coördinate department, but, upon assurances being given that no official shape should attach to the results of the conference, he consented to a free conversation with the gentlemen. The result did not, however, correspond with their expectations. Mr. Adams proved quite impracticable. "I have, on mature reflection," said he to them, "made

[1] Mr. Sedgwick admits that it was "an infraction of correct principles," but, as usual with party men, he lays the blame of it on necessity. *Works of Hamilton*, vol. v. p. 217.

up my mind, and I will neither withdraw nor modify the nomination." Yet perceiving them disposed to transfer their objections from the mission itself to the person named by him to fill it, he did nevertheless make a corresponding change in his position. Should the Senate think proper to decide against Mr. Murray, he suggested the possibility that he might then propose to join with him in a commission two other individuals, who should be sent from the United States whenever the requisite assurances should be obtained that they would be favorably received. This step Mr. Stoddert, his Secretary of the Navy, in a letter written to Mr. Adams some years afterwards, characterized as wise, but, in his opinion, as derogating from his personal dignity. But it is not easy to understand how any proposal that is truly wise is likely to be wanting in dignity. In this case, it would seem rather to have been a very just discrimination between firmness and obstinacy, between adherence to the substance and concession in the form. The very fact that his visitors consented to enter into the second question, raised the strongest implication of their surrender of opposition to the first.

In point of fact, the objections to Mr. Murray were such as senators might legitimately entertain, and as were not without intrinsic weight. The President's reasons for selecting him are obvious enough. He was already in Europe, where he had been resorted to by the French government as the medium of opening their communications with America. Of course they would be precluded from raising objections to further negotiations with the person of their voluntary choice, or, if they did, his testimony as to what had already passed would furnish to the world the strongest evidence of their bad faith. Yet reasonable as were these grounds, and unexceptionable as was Mr. Murray himself, it cannot be denied that his position in the United States had not been so prominent as to justify laying exclusively upon his shoulders so heavy a responsibility. In proposing to join him with two other men of great weight of character, Mr. Adams did exactly what the country would have required of him, and rendered all further opposition to his policy impossible. The committee retired, having gained nothing but the opportunity to reject Mr. Murray, without taking the responsibility of defeating the mission. A meeting of the federal senators was held at the house of Mr. Bingham,

at which this step was finally resolved upon. But even this poor satisfaction was denied to them. For the President, learning the result of their consultations in season, and construing it as a decisive expression of opinion, anticipated their formal action, by sending a new message early the next morning, joining Oliver Ellsworth, chief justice of the supreme court, and Patrick Henry, of Virginia, in the commission with Mr. Murray, and attaching the conditions which he had mentioned in his conference with the committee. This act was decisive. The reluctant senators had in the mean time received an answer from Mr. Hamilton, warning them that a rejection of the measure was utterly out of the question, and proposing no amendment beyond an enlargement of the commission, such as was now voluntarily offered. Every objection was thus removed, and nothing was left to the remonstrants but to ratify with the best grace they could.[1] Yet, singularly enough, as if the judgment of Mr. Adams was ever to stand approved before posterity, the only one of the three nominations which appears on the record as unanimously confirmed, is exactly that which had been objected to, that of William Vans Murray.

Such is the history of this, the most noted event of Mr. Adams's administration. The news of it spread rapidly over the nation. People received it with various and opposite feelings. Some rejoiced, not because they hoped the country might be benefited, but rather that the opposition would be helped. Some mourned, not because the country would, in their opinion, suffer from it, so much as for fear lest the federalists should be shaken by the appearance of dissension. Mr. Jefferson exulted in the idea that "the nomination silenced all arguments against the sincerity of France, and rendered desperate every further effort towards war," neither of which propositions would have been true, had France persevered, instead of changing her policy. Mr. Hamilton and his friends, on the other hand, inveighed against the act as a fatal and dishonest desertion of a settled policy, which required war at least until the time when the French should publicly sue for peace. Neither was this true, the moment after France ceased to show a disposition to provoke a war. Between these hypotheses lay the narrow path

[1] Sedgwick to Hamilton. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 400.

which Mr. Adams had marked out for himself. Ready for war, if France continued faithless, he was not less ready for peace the moment she showed signs of returning reason.

Great, indeed, was the responsibility of the course he took, and heavily would his name have been burdened in after ages, had the event failed to correspond to his expectations. As it actually turned out, there can be no question that the country was rescued from a false step, the consequences of which, in the view of the long wars that afflicted the Christian world, the imagination is baffled in attempting to define. In determining his course, Mr. Adams could confidently count upon no support, unless it was from that inert conscience of the quiet and moderate classes, which never approves but with reserve, or commends without qualification; a conscience, the voice of which, most loud when there is the least necessity for its exercise, is too apt to be frightened into silence in the noise and bustle of factions, when it might do the most good. But even that voice could not now be immediately commanded, since the materials for judgment were not yet before the people. As they gradually made their way, the effects became visible. The moderate federalism of the Middle and Southern States first came up to his support. The only two members of his cabinet who represented it, now ranged themselves decidedly with the President, and in opposition to their colleagues. Patrick Henry applauded the act, although obliged for personal reasons to decline his place in the new embassy. It was equally sustained by the person substituted, Governor Davie, of North Carolina. John Marshall, the leading mind of the rejected mission, as well as the pillar of his party in Virginia, signified his decided approbation. Jay was startled into doubts by the vehemence of the condemnations passed by his friends, whilst Knox, and Lincoln, and Dexter, and many others, less known but equally decided representatives of federal opinions, rallied in his defence. The consequence was, that in a short time all direct attacks upon Mr. Adams for originating a negotiation became futile. The efforts to defeat it were not, however, pretermitted. They now took the indirect shape of procrastination, in the hope, by that means, of bringing it ultimately to nothing. And so well were they concerted, that a will less determined than that of Mr. Adams would scarcely have availed to prevent their success.

And here it must be conceded that a great error was committed by the President. Weary with the conflicts of the session, and anxious to return to the only spot in which he really took delight, his home and his farm, he waited at Philadelphia just long enough to mature with his cabinet the points fixed as *ultimata*, in case the negotiations with France should be renewed, and to prepare the papers required to meet a popular outbreak against the direct tax, in one or two counties of Pennsylvania, before he took his departure for the summer. General Washington had been in the habit of doing the same thing, it is true; but Mr. Adams would have done well to remember that his authority, when absent, was not at all to be compared with his predecessor's, and that, great as it was, even that had not always been respected by some of the cabinet. And if this had happened with Washington, when there was no want of general unison in his counsels, how much more likely was it to occur now that marked lines of difference were drawn. In truth, this would have been the time to come at once to an understanding with his counsellors, as to the footing upon which they were to stand with him for the future. He had a right to demand from them, what a later incumbent in the same office, General Jackson, did from his cabinet, with energy and success, that is, either a hearty general coöperation in one policy, or an opportunity to replace them with persons who would promise it. Had he known the true state of things, there is no reason to doubt that he would have now done what he did after he partially discovered it. But as yet he retained some confidence in the good faith of his ministers. He knew their sentiments, and understood the nature of their connections, but he saw nothing in all this to prevent them from joining, with good-will, in executing his wishes. Too much trust in the honesty of others was the source of the mistakes which did the most to injure his reputation in his lifetime. It gave repeated opportunities for acts of treachery on the part of correspondents, to whom, in the confidence of friendship, he had written unguarded letters; and it at this time presented to his confidential officers an irresistible temptation to wield, without stint, the power in their hands, for the express purpose of controlling his plans and defeating his policy.[1]

[1] *Gibbs*, vol. ii. pp. 213–214.

It will be recollected that notwithstanding Talleyrand's assurances given in the letter to M. Pichon, the messages to the Senate, nominating the ministers, contained a further provision, guarding against a repetition of the treatment experienced by the former commission. They were not to go to France until direct pledges, from the French minister of foreign relations, that they would be received and treated with in character, should have been received. Of course, this interposed months of delay. On the 6th of March, the Secretary of State was instructed to inform Mr. Murray that a literal execution of this condition must be insisted upon; that no indirect or unofficial communication of any kind would be permitted, and no variation of the designated policy listened to, with a single exception, in case the Directory should themselves prefer to send out a minister to Philadelphia. Mr. Murray did not receive his instructions until May. On the 5th of that month, he addressed to M. Talleyrand a note giving the substance of them. Talleyrand replied on the 12th, by explicitly repeating the assurances which had been required, and somewhat querulously complaining of the delays, which, as nobody knew better than he, the bad spirit betrayed in previous transactions had been the only reason for interposing. Mr. Murray at once forwarded this paper; but owing to the slow transmission across the water customary in those days, his dispatches did not arrive in America until the 30th of July.

The next day, the Secretary of State sent M. Talleyrand's note to the President at Quincy, with a comment, which overlooked the substantial concession it contained, to dwell on the language that might be construed as offensive. The President, on the other hand, saw in it only a change of policy, no matter what the motive that prompted it, and disregarded every thing else. His reply to Mr. Pickering contains these words, which comprehensively define his whole line of policy: —

"Still they (the French) shall find, as long as I am in office, candor, integrity, and, as far as there can be any confidence or safety, a pacific and friendly disposition. If the spirit of exterminating vengeance ever arises, it shall be conjured up by them, not me. In this spirit I shall pursue the negotiation, and I expect the coöperation of the heads of departments.

"Our operations and preparations by sea and land are not to

be relaxed in the smallest degree. On the contrary, I wish them to be animated with fresh energy. St. Domingo and the Isle of France, and all other parts of the French dominions are to be treated in the same manner as if no negotiation was going on. These preliminaries recollected, I pray you to lose no time in conveying to Governor Davie his commission, and to the chief justice and his excellency," (Ellsworth,) "copies of these letters from Mr. Murray and Talleyrand, with a request that, laying aside all other employments, they make immediate preparations for embarking..... Although I have little confidence in the issue of this business, I wish to delay nothing, to omit nothing.

"The principal points, indeed all the points, of the negotiation were so minutely considered and approved by me and all the heads of department, before I left Philadelphia, that nothing remains but to put them into form and dress. This service I pray you to perform as promptly as possible. Lay your draft before the heads of department, receive their corrections, if they shall judge any to be necessary, and send them to me as soon as possible."

The three points, alluded to as agreed upon before the President left Philadelphia, were extremely simple. 1. Indemnity for spoliations committed upon American commerce. 2. The exclusion, as a question of negotiation, of all doubt of the wrongfulness of the seizures of American vessels for want of the paper called a *rôle d'équipage;* and, 3. The refusal to renew the treaty guarantee of the French West Indies. With these landmarks, settled upon as *ultimata* the 11th of March, it would seem as if, in anticipation of the opening of negotiations, the leisure before the return of letters from Europe, could have been advantageously used to bring the necessary instructions to a state requiring no further delay. Colonel Pickering seems, however, to have given them little attention, until compelled to do so; and it was six weeks from the receipt of the answer from France, before they had reached a state to be submitted to the approval of the President. A few days of this delay had been caused by the necessity of removing the public offices to Trenton, on account of the ravages of the yellow fever in Philadelphia. But a much stronger reason existed for it, a hint of which now, for the first time, reached the President, in a letter from Mr. Stoddert, the Secretary of the Navy. That

gentleman intimated, in cautious but significant terms, that Mr. Adams's presence was absolutely necessary at Trenton. Simultaneously with the draft of instructions, a letter arrived, signed by Colonel Pickering, but understood to be concurred in by the other heads of department, suggesting the propriety of suspending the mission, at least for some time. Next came a letter from Chief Justice Ellsworth, assigning unusual demands upon his time in his official circuit, as a reason for asking early notice, in case the President should determine to postpone the mission. The coincidence was remarkable, to say the least of it. But it seems at that time to have roused in Mr. Adams no suspicion of the truth. It decided him, however, to take the advice of Mr. Stoddert, to go to Trenton; and to pay a visit to Judge Ellsworth, at his residence in Middletown, on the way.

The repugnance which the friends of Mr. Hamilton entertained to this mission had not been diminished by time.[1] They felt that its success would be disastrous to the war policy, the plan of the army, and of coöperation with Britain, and fatal to the hardly won elevation of their chief. Hence the want of alacrity manifested in accelerating it, the anxious watch for something which might embarrass it, and the eagerness to seize the opportunity when it was thought at last to have happened. This occurred about the 26th of August,[2] when the public officers removed to Trenton, at which time the Secretary of State received a private letter from Mr. Murray, announcing a new revolution in the Directory, with strong symptoms of the restoration of the Jacobins to power, and the resignation of most of the ministers, including Talleyrand himself. This letter was immediately submitted to the other heads of department, and a consultation held, upon the propriety of making it a basis for transmitting to the President, contemporaneously with the form of instructions to the commissioners then nearly ready, a joint remonstrance against the prosecution of the mis-

[1] J. McHenry to G. Washington, in *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 281. T. Pickering to G. Washington, *ib.* p. 280. S. Higginson to O. Wolcott, *ib.* p. 245. G. Cabot to O. Wolcott, *ib.* p. 284. F. Ames to T. Pickering. *Works of Ames*, vol. i. p. 257. "We expected that the mission would first be delayed, and then be relinquished, and our former position, as far as possible, be resumed." J. Morse to O. Wolcott, in *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 287. Dr. Morse's testimony is to the point only as it reflects the ideas current in his circle.

[2] Secretary of State to J. Adams. Vol. ix. p. 23.

sion. It was so determined; and Colonel Pickering, with his customary activity, when his heart was in the work, in forwarding another copy of the instructions to Chief Justice Ellsworth, apprised him likewise of the conclusion to which the cabinet had come, hinting, as there is reason to believe, at the expediency of his reinforcing this application to Mr. Adams, by sending another from himself, as if from an independent source.[1] This produced the letter of the chief justice which has already been mentioned. Altogether the combination was formidable enough. It had members and well-wishers far and wide among the class peculiarly enlisted in the views of Mr. Hamilton, all of whom seem to have waited, with their expectations raised to the highest pitch, the issue of one more attempt to overrule the impracticable President.

The manner in which Mr. Adams met this assault seems to have entirely deceived its projectors. Apparently unconscious of what was going on, he looked at the papers submitted to him, with a single eye to the merits of the question offered to his consideration, and expressed the simple and natural conclusion to which they led. In a suspension of the mission for a few weeks, if events in Europe should seem to demand it, he signified no unwillingness to acquiesce. This is the substance of his replies to both the secretaries, Messrs. Pickering and Stoddert, and to Judge Ellsworth, each of whom had written to him. He even went so far as to designate the latter part of October as the limit of the delay,[2] promising in the meanwhile to be himself at Trenton by the 15th, then and there to judge what it was best, from a view of all the circumstances, to decide. His own opinion, in favor of the prosecution of the mission at the end of the period designated, from a fair comparison of all these papers, can scarcely be mistaken. Yet the hopes which they excited in the persons to whom they were addressed went very much farther. Judge Ellsworth construed his letter as suspending the voyage. And the secretaries augured from theirs an increased probability of victory, through the means which a closer approximation with Mr. Adams

[1] *Gibbs*, vol. ii. pp. 265–267.

[2] To Mr. Pickering he says, "the middle of October." See vol. ix. p. 30. And again, "between the 20th and 30th," p. 33. To Judge Ellsworth "even to the 1st November," p. 35.

would furnish. In order the better to concert their measures, Judge Ellsworth was requested to come from Hartford, whilst General Hamilton himself remained at Newark, within call. Colonel Pickering, in the mean time, had so entirely dropped all reserve, in his mode of speaking of the President, as to create in the minds of at least two of the cabinet a conviction that he ought at once to be removed.[1]

This was the end of the fourth and last, as it was the greatest trial in the public life of Mr. Adams. And looking back upon the details of it, as given by all the various parties concerned, the wonder is, that he went through with it in the manner which they describe. With his quick and inflammable temperament it would have occasioned no surprise, had he, at the expense of violent and long continued altercations with the resolute men around him, perhaps with some loss of personal dignity, painfully succeeded in maintaining his authority. That such a contest had been expected and provided for, there is every reason to believe. Possibly it might have been arranged to make a combined or separate protest against his perseverance, which should drive him to the necessity either of removing his counsellors at once, or of going on in the face of their declared disapprobation.[2] Whatever may have been these calculations, they were destined to be signally disappointed. For he sustained himself without the shadow of a conflict. Mr. Adams paid a brief visit to Chief Justice Ellsworth, at Windsor, on the 3d of October, in which he appears to have expressed the same sentiments to be found in his letters. Judge Ellsworth construed them as he wished; yet some doubts must have sprung up, which drove him to accept Mr. Pickering's invitation to Trenton. The President arrived at that place on the 10th, quite unwell with a severe cold taken on the journey. He met the members of the cabinet with cordiality.[3] Yet one of the number perceived a difference in his treatment of them, especially of the New England members. Mr. Hamilton was soon on the spot too. All awaited the moment for a trial of strength.

[1] McHenry to Washington. *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 282.

[2] This may be inferred from Mr. Wolcott's language in his letter to Mr. Hamilton respecting this affair. *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 278.

[3] McHenry to Washington, *ib.* p. 282.

At last it seemed really to have arrived, and under circumstances singularly favorable to the success of the combination. For the news had just arrived of the only successes of the British expedition under the Duke of York, in Holland, and of the victorious progress of the Russians under Suwarrow in Switzerland. Grant a delay but of a few days, and the next ships might announce Louis the Eighteenth established on the throne of the Bourbons. Such was the cry. The excitement was at its height, and the eagerness to gain a postponement could scarcely be kept within control. Mr. Adams watched the tone of the conversations, and wrote privately to his wife an expression of his amazement at the scene. The vehemence he found in others had the effect of making him perfectly calm. He had no faith in the predictions, and he penetrated the motives of those who were making use of them. He saw it was not a delay merely, but a defeat of the mission, that was anticipated. He foresaw the possibility of a general peace which might insulate America, and in this he proved correct. Whether he had any warning of what his ministers had in store for him, or whether his own sagacity sufficed to comprehend it, is not disclosed. At all events, he was calm and perfectly prepared when, on the evening of the 15th of October, he summoned the cabinet to a meeting. They came, filled with expectation. He began the conference by laying before them the draft of instructions to the commissioners, prepared by the Secretary of State, and sent for his approbation to Quincy, but not yet adopted, on some points of which he still desired their advice. It was accordingly discussed, amended, and finally met their unanimous approval. But this process consumed much time. It had got to be eleven o'clock, too late to begin upon a new discussion. The President started no further propositions, and the members felt that it was no more than proper to disperse. They did so without reluctance, considering the struggle as only put off, perhaps until morning. Great, indeed, must their amazement have been, when, instead of a new summons, two of them received, before breakfast, a laconic direction from the President, in writing, that the papers agreed upon for the use of the commissioners should be forthwith made out, and that the frigate United States should be put in readiness to receive them, and set sail for France on or before the 1st of the coming month.

At this remote period, the tone used by the cabinet officers in complaining of the issue of this contest, appears not a little extravagant. They treat the President as if he had wilfully set a trap for them; as if he had deceived and cheated them out of all chance of opposing his wishes; as if they were the aggrieved persons, because he had not consented to run into the snare which they had set to entangle him. They now imputed to him a sudden fit of caprice, just as they had done in November, when he refused to adopt their draft of a speech, and just as they had done in February, when Mr. Murray was first nominated. And they labored to make out of their studied efforts to fasten upon him some previous marks of acquiescence in their own opinions, the evidence to establish the charge. A calm survey of his course confutes all this. Indeed, the admissions which here and there occur in their own letters, of their fears of his disposition towards their policy, sufficiently prove their distrust of all these attributions. Else what need of the elaborate combinations made to overrule his will, beginning in November of the preceding year, and steadily kept up until now? Did these not sufficiently show the sense entertained of the strength and energy of character which it was indispensable to overcome? Yet, the favorite charge against Mr. Adams, with which they succeeded in making some impression against him in the public mind, was wavering and inconsistency! This seems like assuming that wavering and inconsistency, in the face of a combination so powerful as this was, could effect about as much in executing a consistent policy as the most persevering firmness. Up to this time, whatever else had been said of Mr. Adams, not one of these persons, or any others, had ever disputed his decision and his energy. These were the characteristics which had been the most fully developed in the course of his career, and made the basis of his reputation as a public man. Surely, at this late stage, there is no likelihood that he would begin to develop symptoms of a wholly different and opposite character. Those symptoms might, indeed, have been perceptible, had he acted in any other manner than he did; had he given way upon any essential point, or prayed for any intermediate concession from his opponents. They are not deducible from any fair construction of the whole tenor of his language and action during these months of trial. His purpose was plain

at the outset, and the measures which he took to execute it were simple, easily to be understood, and surely calculated to reach their end. No doubt or delay was interposed by himself, although his hopes of success seem never to have been very sanguine. From first to last, the ruling motive was to rescue, with credit to the country, the imperilled principle of neutrality in the wars of Europe, to which he had all his life been devoted. Neither is it to be questioned that he viewed with alarm the permanent military organization, which others, under his official sanction, were seeking to fasten on the country. He was still essentially the same man that he was when he distrusted in the Revolution the dictatorial powers conferred even on Washington. Hence when the moment came, in which there was ground for supposing peace might be restored, he did not suffer it to pass away unused. The result was that peace was actually made. The clouds rolled away from the political sky. And however severe the trials through which he passed to attain it, however deeply his name was loaded with obloquy by both the contending parties, he might justly have said of this action, as he did to his wife in the memorable case of Independence: "I can see that the end is more than worth all the means. And that posterity will triumph, even though we should rue."

On the 5th of November, the commissioners sailed for their destination.

Satisfied with the accomplishment of his object, the President retained no appearance of ill-will to his recalcitrating counsellors. Only two days after his decision on the embassy, he drew up his customary call upon the heads of department, for their views of the topics proper to be presented to the consideration of congress in his opening speech. This call was as freely answered as in former cases; and Mr. Adams used the materials thus supplied him as he had always done. One little variation, however, may deserve to be noted. The drafts presented by the Secretaries of State and of the Treasury, were not adopted to the same extent as heretofore, and greater recourse was had to that furnished by the Secretary of the Navy. As a whole, the speech is far more the emanation of his own mind than either of its predecessors. The main question which had agitated all parties, the mission to France, was dispatched in a few words,

so ordered that all might assent to them. Allusion was particularly made to the differences which had occurred among the commissioners appointed under two articles of the treaty with Great Britain, and which had put a stop to the proceedings. A revision of the judicial system was recommended; and, in conclusion, an earnest exhortation was given to a perseverance in defensive measures pending the negotiations. The speech is quite short, but in dignity and simplicity it holds its rank with all the other public papers of this administration. It was coldly responded to by the Senate, in which Mr. Hamilton's friends preponderated; and warmly by the House of Representatives under the guidance of John Marshall, who this year commenced that career at home which shed its lustre on some of the highest posts in the government during a prolonged life. He was the exponent of the moderate section of federalists, representing the Southern and Middle States, whom the earlier events in this administration had returned to congress in unusual numbers, and who now gave a tone to the proceedings by no means satisfactory to the more extreme division. For the most part they approved of the policy of Mr. Adams, and favored a retreat from the violent measures of the last year. As a consequence, all efforts to develop the policy of a large army were abandoned; loans or taxes were authorized to as small an extent as possible, and a considerable number showed symptoms of a desire even to repeal the Sedition Law.

Indeed, it must be now conceded that the greatest and most fatal error of the federal party is to be found in the enactment of this law. The other measure, touching the relations of aliens, especially in time of war, which was made equally the burden of complaint by the opposition, although it vested extraordinary powers in the hands of the President, does not, on the whole, seem indefensible, under the general right of self-protection which inheres in every form of social organization, and which no process of reasoning will succeed in practically doing away. But it cannot be denied that the attempt to punish individuals for mere expressions of opinion of public measures and public men, to subject them perhaps to fine and imprisonment, and certainly to heavy and burdensome charges in their defence, for exercising a latitude of speech, however extreme, in the heat and excitement attending the political con-

flicts of a free country, verged too closely upon an abridgment of the liberty of speech and of the press to be quite reconcilable to the theory of free institutions. It furnished a very strong ground of concentration to the opponents of the administration, of which they eagerly availed themselves under the guidance of Mr. Jefferson, moderated and softened by the more balanced judgment of Mr. Madison. Hence sprung up the celebrated resolutions of Virginia and Kentucky, which furnish internal evidence of the sources from which they respectively emanated. These resolutions have been made, more or less, the basis of theories and movements in the United States ever since; but nevertheless, if they are ever pushed to their practical consequences, it is certain that they must make a national government impossible. Thus it is and ever has been in the conflicts of men, that collision itself produces extremes of opinion, which invariably show themselves in the simultaneous development of opposite errors. And the changes which time brings about between parties, reverses the doctrines less than it does the persons who proclaim them. No government can afford to relax the powers which it is called to wield, to the extent that its enemies will be likely to demand. If the federalists encroached upon freedom, their opponents equally bordered upon license; if the former tended to make rigid the muscles of the law, the latter strove to unstring the nerves of liberty. Government prospers only as it stands equidistant from these extremes, alike insensible to menace and incapable of wrong.

The origin of these laws, which have become a word of fear to the popular ear in the United States, it is not material here to investigate, excepting so far as Mr. Adams can be supposed to have been concerned. That he had no hand in suggesting them, is very certain. That he declined to insert in his speeches recommendations, offered by his officers, to restrict the rights of aliens and of naturalization, is likewise certain. Yet when they had been once passed upon by the two houses of congress, he had no such constitutional doubts as would justify his declining to affix his official signature to them, nor any scruples about putting them in execution, in an emergency. On the other hand, he had no confidence in their value as effective measures, and very little inclination to attempt experi-

ments. It was this well understood state of his mind that caused great dissatisfaction among those federalists who had favored their adoption. The traces are frequently visible in such of their letters as have come to light.[1] There was in this respect a radical difference of opinion between these persons and Mr. Adams, which shows itself incidentally in other acts of his administration. His disposition was naturally affectionate and his feelings tender, so that when not stirred by any unusual and positive emotion, there was a constant tendency to be lenient in deciding upon conduct. This may best be illustrated in the various sentences by courts-martial which came up for his approval; in almost all of which he is found averse to the confirmation of harsh judgments.[2] It is perceptible in the sluggishness with which he moved under the instigations of his cabinet to execute the laws now in question. And it becomes striking in the proceedings attending the condemnations for treason, a more particular account of which will presently be given. From all these circumstances, joined to the fact of an almost total absence of allusion to them in his private correspondence, it is fair to infer that Mr. Adams's participation in the Alien and Sedition Laws was confined to his official act of signature. So far as this goes, he is responsible for them, but no further. Yet his name has been associated with them ever since, as much as if he had been the sole contriver of the arbitrary policy which they have been supposed to symbolize. In this respect more unfortunate than his predecessor, General Washington, who is ever associated with all the most brilliant aspirations for human freedom, and yet of whom nothing is more certain than that he actually approved and defended these obnoxious statutes,[3] and that, had he been in the executive chair at the time of their passage, they would equally have received from him a cheerful signature.

That great luminary was, at the moment reached in the present narrative, just setting on the horizon. Never more active in the mere operations of political canvasses than during the preceding year, his death removed the last tie which bound

[1] Hamilton to Dayton. *Works of Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 388. S. Higginson to O. Wolcott. *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 230.

[2] See, for example, the letters in vol. viii. pp. 654, 655, 656, 657, 667, 668.

[3] This is visible in many of his unpublished, as well as in his published letters.

the federal party together, and saved him the painful necessity, to which some indiscreet friends were driving him, of deciding whether to enter once more the arena of contention in person or not. Early in the summer of 1799, the idea had been thrown out by individuals, the friends of Mr. Hamilton, of effecting the displacement of Mr. Adams by appealing to Washington to come forth and consent to fill the President's chair for the third time. The plan had been submitted in secret to the members of the cabinet, who had connived at rather than promoted it, up to the time when the final struggle for predominance took place at Trenton. That once over, no further restraint seems to have bound them. Consultations took place in the New England States, the result of which was that Gouverneur Morris of New York was commissioned to address a formal supplication to the venerable chief to consent to help the country in this hour of its distress.

Without venturing to question the motives that prompted this movement, it may be permitted here to venture a doubt whether its authors had sufficiently considered the state of the times, or foreseen the embarrassments into which they were about to plunge the person to whom they wished nothing but good. So bitter had party feelings become, and so sanguine the opposition under Mr. Jefferson's lead, that even Washington could no longer hope to stand as the type of the sentiments of a whole people. But any thing less than unanimity would have thrown a cloud over the closing splendor of his day. Neither is there any reason to suppose that he ever thought differently. At all events, he was never called to express an opinion. The letter of Gouverneur Morris, which would have forced him to it, found him on his death-bed, preparing for other scenes than those disturbed by the stormy passions of men. As he passed away, the effect was for the moment to calm those passions into silence. Persons of all shades of opinion united to do honor to his memory. Probably Mr. Adams had not been made aware of the secret movements alluded to. He had not been insensible to the use that had been made of the influence of Washington to restrain the freedom of his own action, but it had inspired no suspicion of the motives of that hero, and it in no way diminished the regrets he felt at his decease. Among the various tributes paid to his excellence, that given by the

President in his reply to the address of the Senate on the occasion is remarkable for its feeling. Two passages of it may serve as an illustration: —

"In the multitude of my thoughts and recollections on this melancholy event, you will permit me only to say, that I have seen him in the days of adversity, in some of the scenes of his deepest distress and most trying perplexities; I have also attended him in his highest elevation and most prosperous felicity; with uniform admiration of his wisdom, moderation, and constancy.

"The life of our Washington cannot suffer by a comparison with those, of other countries, who have been most celebrated and exalted by fame. The attributes and decorations of royalty could have only served to eclipse the majesty of those virtues which made him, from being a modest citizen, a more resplendent luminary. Misfortune, had he lived, could hereafter have sullied his glory only with those superficial minds, who, believing that characters and actions are marked by success alone, rarely deserve to enjoy it. Malice could never blast his honor, and envy made him a singular exception to her universal rule. For himself he had lived long enough to life and to glory. For his fellow-citizens, if their prayers could have been answered, he would have been immortal. For me, his departure is at a most unfortunate moment. Trusting, however, in the wise and righteous dominion of Providence over the passions of men and the results of their counsels and actions, as well as over their lives, nothing remains for me but humble resignation."

With this melancholy event faded the last hope of preserving harmony in the counsels of the federalists. Mr. Hamilton, in losing the hold he had obtained upon the confidence of General Washington, was compelled to surrender all further expectations of controlling their policy. He foresaw that the command of the army, which he virtually held already, would not be conferred upon him in terms. Many of the inducements which had tempted him to aspire to it, had already been weakened by the unexpected turn affairs had taken both abroad and at home. The policy which he had originated was in ruins, and he only looked to save detached portions of it.[1] But the

[1] A very good picture of his mind at this time is given in his letter to Rufus King of the 5th of January, 1800. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. pp. 415–417.

resentment which he felt against the individual whose action had most contributed to destroy it, had taken the place of other emotions. It showed itself most decisively throughout the attempts that were from this time made to bring about some sort of coöperation between the sections of the party. Of these, the largest in numbers sided with the President, whilst the minority made up in talents and activity for that deficiency. All were, however, equally sensible of the pressure of the united opposition, and nearly all were disinclined to forget the risk of a common discomfiture, and perhaps a lasting dispersion, in a mere conflict of personal ascendency. In their minds, the danger of the success of Mr. Jefferson was imminent, and the salvation of the country from that peril, a vital question. In order to escape it, all the federalists in congress were summoned to meet together, for the purpose of devising some means of establishing concert in their future action. The immediate question related to the candidates to be presented at the election for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency soon to come on, which involved the necessity of determining the position of Mr. Adams. The minority warmly and earnestly demanded that he should be set aside. But when urged to name a substitute, they had none to present with the smallest prospect of success. It was generally felt that the retirement of Mr. Adams would only open the way to the accession of Mr. Jefferson.

Sensible of the truth of this, especially in New England, from whence many of the minority came, they found themselves at last compelled to offer a compromise. They consented to accept Mr. Adams as one candidate, provided that General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, the same gentleman who had the year before so cheerfully submitted to the military precedence of Mr. Hamilton, could be adopted as the other, and no understanding made of the intent in filling the respective places. But even this concession was more than it was possible to obtain. The overruling objection was that the suspicion it would raise of bad faith would inevitably elect Mr. Jefferson. Hence, the best that could be done was to agree that the two persons named should be equally supported by all the federalists throughout the country; it being, however, understood, that Mr. Adams, though designed to fill the first office, was subject to those chances of a different result which the peculiar opera-

tion of the constitutional provision might naturally present. Such are the terms of this compact as explained by persons belonging to the minority.[1] Mr. Hamilton seems to have been dissatisfied with them, though his friends acquiesced. Mr. Adams had no agency direct or indirect in producing them. The age of personal solicitation for high office had not arrived.

In the mean time, however, two events occurred of great importance. The first was, the election of the legislature which would determine the political character of New York at the presidential election. Here the influence of Mr. Hamilton had been exerted in furtherance of the design he now avowed,[2] to set aside Mr. Adams in favor of Mr. Pinckney. Upon that pivot the selection of the federal candidates in the city had been made to turn just as it did at the election four years before. The consequence was that the moderate class of men were neglected, from a fear that they might lean to Mr. Adams. Mr. Burr, who saw the error, immediately adapted his policy to the contingency, and succeeded in connecting them with the opposition. In this way, General Gates, always friendly to Mr. Adams, George Clinton, and the Livingstons, were drawn into a combination with which they had little affinity beyond a common enmity to Mr. Hamilton, and which, by attracting the doubtful voters in the city, effected the final return of the State to its old revolutionary associations, against New England, and with the adverse influence of Virginia.

The other event was the execution of the design the President had for some time entertained of changing the members of his cabinet. With Mr. McHenry he had never been entirely satisfied, on the score of his incompetency to the laborious office to which he had been assigned. Complaints of him had abounded ever since the commencement of the administration, but they had grown more and more loud after his duties were increased by the difficulties with France. The traces of this are visible in the correspondence of General Washington, of Hamilton, of Wolcott, and many other leading men. They reach even to a manifestation of impatience with the President for not

[1] Cabot to Hamilton, in *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 459. James McHenry to O. Wolcott. *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 385. Harper's Letter to his constituents, there quoted.

[2] Hamilton to Sedgwick. *Works*, vol. vi. pp. 440, 441.

acting with more energy in removing him. But Mr. Adams, as has been already remarked, entered upon his post with no disposition to make changes in the administration, and least of all in the case of Mr. McHenry, for whom, in his personal intercourse, he had learned to cherish some regard. There can be little doubt that the intentions of that officer were of the best; but as little, that his capacity and energy were by no means corresponding. The consequence was, that he became insensibly dependent upon the abilities of Mr. Hamilton for aid in conducting the details of his department, subject, however, to vacillation and change under the disturbing force applied from time to time by the will of the President himself. The effect was to present to the world an appearance of irregularity and uncertainty, which materially contributed to shake confidence in the system of the administration. These symptoms grew more perceptible as the difference between the President and Mr. Hamilton became more wide. To the latter Mr. McHenry habitually deferred, as the director of his official administration. To him he looked, and not to Mr. Adams, as the guide of his political system. Hence his deference to the wishes of the latter became cold, reluctant, and dilatory, as the breach with Mr. Hamilton grew more positive.

But Mr. Adams had now reached a point when he foresaw that a necessity might occur for the coöperation of some one in the reduction of the military system who sympathized more closely with his own views. Washington was no longer the nominal commander-in-chief. His decease would involve the necessity of deciding upon the position of Mr. Hamilton as the next in command, on which he had made up his mind beforehand. And he knew Mr. McHenry's relations too well, and had experienced too much of his opposition in his cabinet, not to comprehend the necessity of his removal, if he desired to make sure of the execution of his own policy. Yet there is no knowing how long he might have delayed his action, but for an accidental conversation which terminated in an open variance. Of this conversation, Mr. McHenry afterwards furnished to Mr. Hamilton his own version. It is fair to infer from it at least this, that Mr. Adams lost his temper, a failing for which Mr. Hamilton afterwards made him pay a severe penalty, and for which he sometimes reproached himself. He was thus led on

to say many unguarded, and some harsh things, that might have been better omitted, at least in presence of an enemy on the watch to take advantage of them. So far as they wounded the feelings of Mr. McHenry, Mr. Adams afterwards regretted them, for no man ever bore less malice in his composition. But he did not regret the step to which they brought him. McHenry's resignation was no sooner offered than accepted, to take effect in three weeks.

The case of Colonel Pickering came next. Falling into his office rather by accident, he had manifested in the performance of its duties great industry, punctuality, courage, and qualifications, if not of the first class, certainly far from discreditable to himself or to the country which he had been called to represent. His public papers have the merit of clearness, directness, and simplicity. Had he contented himself with an exclusive devotion to his duties, and a faithful coöperation with the objects of his chief, there never could have been a question of his removal. But herein was his great mistake. Never much used to the control of his vehement impulses, he construed his position as permitting him the right not only to dispute in private, but to counteract both in public and private, such portions of the measures of the President as he happened to disapprove. Neither was this all. He did not hesitate to use the information which he obtained by virtue of his confidential relation, the more effectually to promote his views. The acts and the language of Mr. Adams were noted and reported, not less than the details of his official policy, for the sake of either controlling or defeating it, and at any rate of discrediting him. No similar practice has occurred since that period. Of the extent to which it was carried, Mr. Adams was never made fully aware. If he had known what has since been disclosed, it is impossible to suppose that Colonel Pickering could have remained in his cabinet a day after the 6th of July, 1798. Why he knew no more than he did, might cause a little wonder, considering that Colonel Pickering was not a man of concealments, if all history did not show that people around a ruler, whose evidence is really worth having, are seldom forward to acquaint him with unpleasant truth. He did know enough, however, from the revelations made at the time of Mr. Murray's nomination, and still more at Trenton, during the memorable struggle six months

later, to become convinced that his duty to himself required the presence of an adviser in the State department in whose fidelity he could have full confidence. Accordingly, he seized the opportunity now presented by the resignation of Mr. McHenry, to extend to Colonel Pickering the offer of retiring in the same manner. This was done in a perfectly unexceptionable form, although no room was left to doubt the alternative in case of his refusal. The reply of Colonel Pickering is not in his customary style. It is not direct, nor logical in adapting the premises to his conclusion. It dwells upon his poverty in a manner that, if it meant any thing, seems to deprecate the stroke which his own conduct, as he could not fail to know, had deprived him of all right to resent. For his colleagues, who had been best acquainted with it, manifested no surprise at the sentence. Some of them had expected it would happen earlier. If then he felt it to be inevitable, it would have been more dignified not to plead in mitigation of it. Especially as he was full of schemes of vengeance, which he communicated at once to Mr. Hamilton, offering to supply him with many facts which his official station had put in his power, to make up what he called "a frank and bold exposure of Mr. Adams."[1]

This intimation met with a favorable reception from the person to whom it was addressed. The nominations of John Marshall, of Virginia, as Secretary of State, in the place of Colonel Pickering, and of Samuel Dexter, of Massachusetts, as Secretary of War, instead of Mr. McHenry, sufficiently indicated the intentions of the President. They had been received with satisfaction by the moderate federalists, whilst they were viewed by the others as precluding all further insinuations of bargaining with the opposite party, in which they had largely indulged, and, at the same time, a sure presage of the downfall of their own influence. Anxious to ascertain, by personal observation, the probability of averting this calamity by the substitution of General Pinckney for Mr. Adams as the President for the next term, Mr. Hamilton undertook a journey through Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, the States where the people were supposed to be the most likely to make difficulties, on account of their attachment to the latter. This

[1] *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 443.

was executed in the month of June, 1800. The issue was not favorable to his hopes. He found "the leaders of the first class generally right, but the leaders of the second class were too much disposed to favor Mr. Adams." The remedy was an exposure of the sort which Colonel Pickering had proposed. Of course, he and McHenry could be relied upon for aid in supplying the materials. But that was not enough. Recourse must be had to another person still in place, and able to betray all the movements of the cabinet down to the last moment. That person was Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury, whose fidelity Mr. Adams never for an instant suspected; who had always so carefully regulated his external deportment, that no one could suppose him likely to become the secret channel through which all the most confidential details of the administration, of which he was a part, should be furnished, with the intent to destroy its head.[1] Yet such is the fact which history now most unequivocally discloses. Instead of being too suspicious, as the enemies of his own household chose to describe him, the President had, in the excess of his confidence, retained in his bosom the most subtle and venomous serpent of them all.

The session of congress had been marked by a more decided preponderance of the federalists in both branches than had been the case for years. But in the House the accessions had not been of the more violent class. The effect of this was visible in the legislation, the character of which was moderate, creditable, and judicious. All thoughts of the great military organization which had been contemplated, were at once abandoned. The plans of expenditure which threatened severely to burden the growing energies of the people were reduced; whilst measures were continued to enforce and confirm the system of naval defences, and to persevere in the interdict of all commercial intercourse with France. Several important laws were enacted of a purely domestic character, calculated to quiet past difficulties, or to develop the resources of the country. The dulness of ordinary legislation was now and then relieved by eloquent debates. The most important of these related to an instance of extradition of a seaman charged with crimes committed on board of a British frigate. It was the case of Thomas Nash, or,

[1] Wolcott to Hamilton. *Works*, vol. vi. p. 444.

according to the opposition, who insisted that he was an American and improperly surrendered, of Jonathan Robbins. This discussion elicited a display of the abilities of the House on both sides, and terminated in a speech from John Marshall, which at once settled the question, and established his own reputation as the first man of the assembly. Taken all in all, there are few portions of the legislative history of the country, to which the historian can look back with more pride and satisfaction than to the details of this session. The Lower House was yet a deliberative assembly, confining itself to the objects before it, and discussing them in a business-like and yet a comprehensive spirit; and the Senate was a select council of statesmen, true to their duties, not ambitious of logomachy, and not making their honorable station subsidiary to other objects with which it has no natural or legitimate connection. If the federalists have sins to answer for, that of letting down the dignity of the government is not among them. The result of their action at this period was greatly calculated to increase the public confidence in the wisdom and discretion which they brought to the direction of affairs. That such would have been the effect, had it not been for the untoward nature of the events that followed, there is strong reason to believe.

Previously to entering upon these, it is necessary to explain one other circumstance which contributed to keep open the breach now made in the ranks of the federal party. Some time in the spring of 1798, there had taken place in Northampton County, in Pennsylvania, as has already been mentioned, an armed resistance to the levy of the direct tax, which spread into two or three of the neighboring counties, and for a few days assumed an appearance so alarming as to justify the President's proclamation and orders to equip a military force to put it down. The mere apparition of this force proved sufficient to effect the object. The men who had taken the lead in the disorders, being deserted by their fellows, were made prisoners, and handed over for trial to the courts. The principal one was a person by name John Fries, who was found with arms in his hands, acting as a chief, although he seems to have possessed few qualities to recommend him for any such elevation. His associates, generally from among the German population of the State, proved to be of a low order of intelligence, utterly

unequal to devising any scheme of concerted resistance to rightful authority. At the next term of the United States circuit court, which took place in a few weeks, Fries was put upon his trial, on the charge of treason, and, after nine days spent in the proceedings, was found guilty by the verdict of a jury. The result was immediately communicated to Mr. Adams, at Quincy, by Colonel Pickering and by Mr. Wolcott, in separate letters, expressive of their satisfaction.[1] The latter incidentally mentioned that Mr. Lewis, of counsel for the prisoner, had on all occasions during the trial insisted that the offence committed did not amount to treason. He likewise reported the remark as coming from Fries, that persons of greater consequence had been at the bottom of the business.

Both these suggestions seem to have had much weight in the mind of Mr. Adams. He deeply felt the responsibility imposed upon him. To Colonel Pickering he replied in these words: —

"The issue of this investigation has opened a train of very serious contemplations to me, which will require the closest attention of my best understanding, and will prove a severe trial to my heart."

To the attorney-general, Mr. Lee, he sent a request to obtain a sight of Mr. Lewis's reasons for his opinion, whilst to Mr. Wolcott he wrote for information as to the character of Fries, the nature and extent of the combination of which he appeared to be the head, and the truth of his intimation, that others of greater importance were behind the scenes.[2] He ended with these words: —

"It highly concerns the people of the United States, and especially the federal government, that, in the whole progress and ultimate conclusion of this affair, neither humanity be unnecessarily afflicted, nor public justice be essentially violated, nor the public safety endangered."

These letters were received by the persons to whom they were addressed, with some dismay. They did not understand why the President should entertain his own views of the law, after the proper court had adjudicated upon it, and they honestly thought that the public safety required an immediate

[1] See the Letters. Vol. viii. pp. 644, 645.
[2] See the Letters. Vol. viii. pp. 648, 649, 650.

example to be made of Fries. "Painful as is the idea of taking the life of a man," said Pickering, "I feel a calm and solid satisfaction that an opportunity is now presented, in executing the just sentence of the law, to crush that spirit, which, if not overthrown and destroyed, may proceed in its career, and overturn the government."

Obviously two different views of duty are here presented, both conscientiously held, but having their source in radical differences of natural character. A conflict between them was, for the time, postponed, by the decision of the court that condemned Fries, which granted a new trial, on the ground that one of the jury was proved to have prejudged the case. Another long and very elaborate hearing followed, Judge Chase now presiding instead of Judge Iredell, the issue of which was the same as before, the condemnation of Fries. This involved the fate of two other persons dependent upon the views taken of the same general testimony. Once more the question of ordering their execution came up for the consideration of the President. It was just at the moment when the change was taking place in his cabinet officers, and whilst but three persons remained to advise him. To those three he therefore submitted, on the 20th of May, a series of thirteen questions, the drift of which sufficiently shows the state of his own mind.[1] The answer, given on the same day, showed a division of opinion among the three; Mr. Wolcott remaining unshaken in his belief that the execution of all three was demanded in order "to inspire the well-disposed with confidence in the government, and the malevolent with terror;" the other two believing that the execution of Fries would "be enough to show the power of the laws to punish." But even they inclined to the execution of the three, rather than to have all three released.

In this case the cabinet could not complain that they had not been consulted at every step. But that seems to have made no difference in the feeling with which at least one of the disaffected viewed the direction of the President, given the next day, that a pardon should be made out for all the offenders. As

[1] See vol. ix. pp. 57–58. The view of treason opened in this case there is no room here to consider. It must infallibly come up for revision at some time or other in the courts of the United States.

usual, an effort was made to prove inconsistency, and from thence to deduce a personal motive for the act. It was a "fatal concession to his enemies." The act was "popular in Pennsylvania." Such was the tone of the disappointed federalists, who saw in it, and, so far, very correctly, another divergency from the policy which they would have introduced into the federal government. In truth, there is no need of searching deep to find causes for the opposite opinions generated by this event. They lie thickly spread upon the surface of the correspondence during this administration, much of which is laid before the world in the present work. They are the legitimate offspring of the division of opinion into three forms, which has been distinctly developed in the action of all the administrations in America since the first, and which must ever show itself in nations enjoying free institutions, wherever they may be found.

This is the period when the administration of Mr. Adams for the first time appears as a consistent whole. His cabinet was now substantially in harmony with him. Only one member of it remained to repine at the policy indicated, secretly to wish it defeated, to disparage the acts and motives of his chief and his colleagues, and to betray all the proceedings to their enemy.[1] Henceforth there is no room for details, as the administration pursued the even tenor of its way, laboring to smooth off the external difficulties with which it had to contend. In this task it was eminently successful. Mr. Marshall, the new Secretary of State, set in motion a negotiation which put an end to the irritations that had followed the inability of the two different commissions under Mr. Jay's treaty with Great Britain to come to an understanding. And out of the obscurity the signs of peace began to dawn even on the continent of France. Napoleon had at last stepped in to the place which he had long

[1] "If I can escape from the toils without loss of character, I will take care not to expose myself to such *risques* as I have of late encountered." Such is Mr. Wolcott's confession of his state of mind at the time of his resignation. In view of this, and of his subsequent change of course, it has not been without deep regret that these strictures have been prepared. But they seem absolutely demanded by the use that has been made of his papers since his decease. Had these been permitted to remain undisclosed, or had they not been made the groundwork of new attacks upon Mr. Adams's good name, no part of this picture could have been painted. For Mr. Adams always retained his confidence in Mr. Wolcott's good faith. There is not a trace of the contrary recollected among his papers.

kept in his eye, pushing down, on the one hand, the relics of the old *régime*, and, on the other, the crumbling columns of the revolutionary temple. To him a quarrel with America seemed purely preposterous. It followed, as a natural consequence, that peace became only a question of terms. He who was busy in holding in his vigorous grasp the reins of Europe, was not likely to have his attention long turned aside by the complaints from the United States of an anterior policy for which he himself had no respect. Yet the conqueror of Marengo could not be expected to consent to have concessions dictated to him by any power which had not ready means at hand to enforce them at the point of the bayonet. The American commissioners, fully conscious of the delicacy of their situation, accommodated themselves to it with dexterity and judgment. The treaty, which was the result, like many other instruments of the same sort before and since, touched but lightly on the causes of grievance between the two countries, and seemed to grant little redress to the wrongs of which America justly complained. But it gained what was of more worth to them; and that was, a termination of all further danger of war, and a prevention of the causes of future difficulties. And even what it lost of redress was the consequence not so much of the treaty itself as of the temper of the Senate, which caused one of the articles to be expunged as a condition of its ratification. The nature and consequences of this amendment will be explained presently. It is sufficient now to say that these measures had the effect of reëstablishing the neutral policy of the United States, which had been for years in imminent peril, and of smoothing the way to the period of great prosperity which followed. It is difficult to imagine any other result of the turmoil and conflict of opinions that had so long prevailed, which, on the whole, deserved to insure a better return of gratitude to its authors, from the great body of citizens most deeply interested in the country's welfare.

Yet, strange as it may seem, from that day to this, an award of merit for such a successful termination of the difficult task of this administration has been entirely withheld. The causes of this must now be explained, however painful may be the task. The federal party could have easily borne the trial of the appeal to arms against France and of a direct tax. It might

have gone safely through the fire of the Alien and Sedition Laws, and its corollaries of the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions. Possibly it would have breasted the odium of an army needlessly large, and organized for other than its ostensible objects. But it could not be expected to endure the cross of *bad faith*. The moment when an active minority determined to adopt a line of conduct marked by indirectness of purpose even to treachery, was the moment when wise and patriotic citizens had reason to foresee that shipwreck must inevitably ensue.

Although the truce which had been agreed upon by the two divisions of the party, at the close of the session of 1800, had been predicated upon a concession of a fair and equal support of Mr. Adams and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, as candidates for the highest office, the designation of Mr. Adams for the preference being rather understood than avowed, it very soon became known that Mr. Hamilton and his friends felt at liberty to exert themselves to the utmost, in secretly decrying the character and conduct of one of the persons, for the sake of creating an ultimate preponderance for the other. The word was confidentially given out that Mr. Adams must be sacrificed. To this end information was to be privately furnished of the defects in his character, which were relied upon as a justification for this extraordinary course. As yet but a very small portion of the correspondence, through which this plan was attempted, has found its way to the light. To dwell on its unpleasant details is no part of the present purpose. It bears on its face the verdict which posterity will not fail to pass upon it. All the prominent actors betray their sense of its character so clearly as to make forbearance to expose it no virtue. The letters of Oliver Wolcott, of Fisher Ames, of George Cabot, of James McHenry, of Benjamin Goodhue, all[1] equally plead guilty to the tortuous expedients of political rancor. Yet nobody will charge them with deliberate malice or dishonesty. They were servants of a will stronger than their own; of a spirit that

[1] For single examples of this confession, in the instances named, see Mr. Gibbs's *Work*, vol. ii. pp. 384, 407, 431. *Ames's Works*, vol. ii. p. 281. *A. Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 479. But this is no way to get at the whole truth. He who seeks it, must read all the letters together, so far as they have yet been permitted to see the light, and compare the general drift of them with the estimable character of their authors in private life.

could never brook a superior or abide an equal; of one whose disappointment had been as great as his aspirations, and whose self-restraint yielded under the temptation of wreaking his vengeance upon the person who had occasioned it. Mr. Hamilton's rivalries whether with Jefferson, with John Adams, or with Aaron Burr were never kept within the limits of defensive or moderate warfare; and to this cause it was that he owed his premature and inglorious downfall.

Mr. Adams on his side was not of a spirit to be daunted by denunciation, or to permit himself to be sacrificed without a murmur. He had formed his own opinions of the policy of Mr. Hamilton and his friends, which had impaired his confidence in them, not less than theirs had become impaired in him. The measure which they had first proposed to him under the name of *coöperation* with Great Britain, he now fully believed to have been intended only as a preliminary to an alliance, offensive and defensive, which would have shut out all prospect of further preserving a neutrality in the wars of Europe.[1] And indeed, it is difficult at this distance of time to resist the conviction, that such must have been the consequence of their system, even conceding that they may not themselves have foreseen it. But such an admission can be made only at a heavy expense to their sagacity, so that the inference from the testimony on record is rather that they acted from design. At all events their course had so far committed them, as to render great prudence advisable in avoiding to give cause for an exposure of these differences. Such prudence they unfortunately did not exercise. Intelligence of their endeavors to destroy his character and reputation soon reached the ears of Mr. Adams, as it could scarcely fail to do, however secretly they might labor. In this crisis he was not likely to confine himself to defence. Cool and collected when summoned to act in public on any emergency, he was seldom in the habit of resisting his natural impetuosity in the less guarded hours of private intercourse and familiar conversation. Then it was, that he would give to his language

[1] Mr. Gibbs, whose admissions must be taken as superseding the necessity of further citation of authorities, so far as they relate to the policy of this section of the federalists, concedes that "an alliance *might* have taken place;" but he says, "it would have been for common defence." Vol. ii. p. 219. Mr. Hamilton, however, expressly declares that he contemplated offensive operations. *Works*, vol. v. p. 184.

the full impress of his vehement will. He spoke out his thought with the force which only indignation gives. This must be confessed to have been his greatest disqualification for success in public life, which requires, above all things, an open countenance with closed lips, the offspring of an impassible heart. Mr. Adams had nothing of this. His nature though placable, was ardent, and it occasionally impelled him to say more than he really meant, which he sometimes himself described as rodomontade, and to express even what he did mean much too sharply. These were errors, it is true, but at least they sprung from qualities thoroughly honest. The consequence was, that his language excited a greater degree of sensibility in the objects of his attack from its unsparing directness. He charged the hostility, waged by Mr. Hamilton and his friends against himself to their disappointment, in failing to establish through his aid the desired connection with Great Britain, against France. And his statement may now be affirmed to have been in substance correct, without the necessity of implying the existence of wrong motives in them. Yet such a charge could not fail at that time to strike deeply at the influence of those at whom it was levelled. The evidence how much they felt it, is visible in their secret letters.[1] The danger was great that even the relatively small popular force they could command, would dwindle away, and leave nothing but leaders. It was plain, too, that their plan of setting aside Mr. Adams by obtaining an equal vote for General Pinckney, was breaking down. There were those in New England, who, when they learned the object of the scheme, could not be induced to sacrifice Mr. Adams. Mr. Hamilton had become convinced of it by personal observation. The consequence was inevitable, that the success of the federal party would make Mr. Adams President. And to this, involving as he foresaw it must, the loss of all power over the next administration, he was not prepared to bring his mind to submit. He proceeded to take his measures, in order to prevent it.

It has already been mentioned that Mr. Hamilton, immediately upon his return from New England, applied to the Secretary of the Treasury for details of confidential transactions in the cabinet, to be used by him "among discreet persons," to destroy

[1] *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 422. A curious example of the feeling of the time is found in a letter of Timothy Phelps to Oliver Wolcott. *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 380.

their faith in Mr. Adams. But this was not the only object he had in view; for in the same letter he added an intimation of a design, to write to Mr. Adams, touching certain reports in circulation, of allusions made by him, in conversation, to the existence of a British faction, of which he, Hamilton, was named as one, and to demand an explanation. He added these words: "Mr. Adams's friends are industrious in propagating the idea, to defeat the efforts to unite for Pinckney. The inquiry I propose, may furnish an antidote and vindicate character. What think you of this idea? For my part I can set malice at defiance."

From this language it would seem clear, that the project of calling upon Mr. Adams had its source in other motives, than a quick sense of personal injury. It was a politic movement designed to neutralize the labors of Mr. Adams's friends to defeat the success of Mr. Pinckney. The effect of calumny upon himself, he professed not to apprehend.

Mr. Wolcott replied to this letter on the 7th of July. He evidently understood Mr. Hamilton in the sense just given. He cheerfully agreed to furnish the requisite information, so soon as he could arrange his papers, much disturbed by his late official removal to the new seat of government, because he thought "it would be a disgrace to the federal party, to permit the reëlection of Mr. Adams." And he closed by saying, "You may rely upon my coöperation in every reasonable measure for effecting the election of General Pinckney."

On the 1st of August the call upon Mr. Adams was accordingly prepared. As addressed to a person then holding the office of President of the United States, and endeavoring to make him responsible not only for reports of his own conversations, but also for the supposed language of his political adherents, it is very obvious, that Mr. Hamilton could not have expected any reply. Very certainly, propriety demanded that none should be made. Mr. Hamilton in point of fact, did not anticipate a reply. For only two days afterwards, and seven days before his note reached Mr. Cabot, through whom it was forwarded to Mr. Adams,[1] he wrote again to Mr. Wolcott,[2] expressing impatience at the delay of the promised statement, and announcing

[1] Cabot to Hamilton. *Works*, vol. vi. p. 453.
[2] *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 449.

an intention to proceed at once to a publication of his opinion of Mr. Adams, as "best suited to the plain dealing of his character." Then, with the singular inconsistency which marks almost every step of these proceedings, he went on to show how little he felt that he was acting up to the character for plain dealing which he claimed for himself. The words are too remarkable to be omitted.

"There are, however," he says, "reasons against it. And a very strong one is, that some of the principal causes of my disapprobation proceed from yourself, and other members of the administration, who would be understood to be the sources of my information, *whatever cover I might give the thing.*

"What say you to this measure? I could predicate it on the fact, that I am abused by the friends of Mr. Adams, who ascribe my opposition to pique and disappointment; *and could give it the shape of a defence of myself.*"

Surely this language will scarcely answer to any definition of the term *plain dealing*. It sufficiently shows that the demand of an explanation was a mere cover to an attack which Mr. Hamilton had for some time designed to make, out of the materials with which his confederates of the cabinet had been steadily supplying him during the whole period of the administration. And that he was withheld from it only by the fear of betraying the sources from which he had got his information. This difficulty pressed hardly not on him alone, but upon the confidential friends to whom he communicated his intentions. George Cabot, Fisher Ames, and Oliver Wolcott himself grew pale at the idea of an open assault upon the President. They all wrote letters of remonstrance,[1] dwelling upon the imputation of breach of faith to which it exposed them with their own friends, if the design of destroying Mr. Adams should be avowed, and upon the absurdity of the other position, of continuing to uphold as a candidate a person whom the argument was intended to prove wholly unfit for the office. These three letters supply a curious but painful picture of the moral difficulties, into which honorable men sometimes allow themselves, in the heat of party passions, to get entangled. But a deeper shadow falls upon it,

[1] See the letters in full. Wolcott to Hamilton. *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 416. Cabot to Hamilton. *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 458. Ames to Hamilton, *ib.* p. 463. Hamilton to Wolcott. *Gibbs*, vol. ii. p. 422.

when the fact is perceived that the concluding advice of all three is, not to withhold the attack, but only to withhold the name of the assailant. It would be safer to make it anonymously. This proposal to skulk in ambush could not have fallen pleasantly on the feelings of Hamilton, even when under the unnatural tension to which they were now subjected. Neither would the stroke be nearly so effective. He concluded to prosecute his purpose, regardless equally of their good and bad advice; and on the 26th of September he transmitted to Mr. Wolcott the draft which he had prepared, with a request that he would "note exceptionable ideas or phrases." "Some of the most delicate of the facts stated," he added, "I hold from the three ministers, yourself particularly; and I do not think myself at liberty to take the step without your consent. *I never mean to bring proof*, but to stand upon the credit of my veracity."

The reply of Mr. Wolcott is long. It corrects many statements in the draft, and dissuades the publication of others. But its most remarkable admissions appear in the conclusion. He says: —

"As to the measure itself, I can give no opinion. My feelings and individual judgment are in favor of it. I never liked the half-way plan which has been pursued. It appears to me, that federal men are in danger of losing character in the delicate point of sincerity. Nevertheless, when I consider the degree of support which Mr. Adams has already received; that our friends in Massachusetts say that they still *prefer* the election of Mr. Adams; that the country is so divided and agitated as to be in some danger of civil commotions, I cannot but feel doubts as to any measure, which can possibly increase our divisions. You can judge of the state of public opinion in the eastern States better than I can. If the popular sentiment is strong in favor of Mr. Adams,—if the people in general approve of his late public conduct, or if there is a want of confidence, for any reason, in General Pinckney, I should think the publication ought to be suppressed; on the contrary, if the publication would increase the votes for General Pinckney, and procure support to him in case he should be elected, it would certainly be beneficial. Notwithstanding your impressions to the contrary, I am not convinced that Mr. Adams can seriously injure your character."

It should be recollected that the professed object of Mr. Ham-

ilton's paper was the defence of character. How little stress Mr. Wolcott laid upon it, is shown plainly enough in this extract. What he considered to be the true object, is likewise clear. If the attack could be the means of politically destroying Mr. Adams, or of establishing General Pinckney, it was worth making. If on the other hand, Mr. Adams was likely to maintain his ground in the affections of the people of Massachusetts, the publication which was to prove his unfitness for their confidence was to be suppressed. Surely no more can be necessary to prove that he viewed the thing as a pure electioneering device. Not so with Mr. Hamilton however. He went on to print, without giving his friends any assurances of the mode in which he meant ultimately to use his paper. Perhaps he had not made up his own mind, down to the moment, when an accident is supposed to have settled it for him. His arch-enemy, Aaron Burr, by some means not yet fully explained, got access to the sheets whilst passing through the press, and caused extracts to be published in the opposition newspapers far and wide. The partial use thus made of the attack, was assigned as a reason for authorizing a complete publication. So it came out, under the title of a "Letter from Alexander Hamilton, concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States." This was in the very last week of October, but a short time before the choice of electors in the different States. If the single purpose had been to defeat Mr. Adams at all hazards, no more propitious moment could have been thought of. Yet, with the singular fatality of retribution, which more than once attended the acts of Mr. Hamilton, the sequel showed that, at the instant of this publication, he was striking the first spade into what was ere long to be to him a duellist's grave. Whilst on the other hand, the object of his vindictive assault, outliving the days of bitter trial, which it prepared for him, was destined at last to close his eyes with the acclamation of millions uniting to do unexampled honors to his name.

A publication, having for its object the destruction of the public character of a man who had spent twenty-five years of his life in stations of the highest responsibility, in some of which he had acquitted himself so honorably as to have extorted even from its author both praise and support, needed the most convincing proof of very grave offences against the public good in

order to make it justifiable before the world. Especially was this true, when a consequence was liable to ensue, that was esteemed by the assailant, and at least one half of the nation, to be fraught with extreme peril to the state. That such a consequence did not actually follow, is not material to this view of the case. The only question is, what Mr. Hamilton himself anticipated. In magnifying, as he habitually did, the dangers certain to attend the triumph of Mr. Jefferson and his friends, he in the same degree magnified his own responsibilities, if by any act of his that triumph were to be secured. Neither could he release himself from them, excepting by the offer of the most irresistible evidence to show such incompetency or malfeasance in office on the part of the individual relied upon by his own party as the only formidable competitor for the public favor, as to render it probable that the country would suffer even greater evils from his success. So soon as the news of Mr. Hamilton's pamphlet went abroad, men of all parties naturally expected disclosures of the gravest offences, involving the moral and political integrity of the President. What was their surprise then, to discover, in the course of thirty printed pages, that the proofs relied upon to show Mr. Adams utterly unfit to be President, were not deemed by the author himself sufficient to prevent his advising his friends not to withhold from the object of his invective one single vote!

Of course the charges could not fail to correspond to the monstrous logical solecism, with which they concluded. The gravest of them were founded upon the determination of Mr. Adams to initiate the mission of Mr. Murray to France without consulting his cabinet; upon his perseverance in afterwards dispatching Messrs. Ellsworth and Davie, in opposition to the better judgment of Mr. Hamilton and his friends; and upon his pardon of John Fries, who according to them should rather have been hanged. Neither of these acts, even if admitted to be an error, was shown to have vitally injured the government, or to involve any censure of the author beyond a defect of judgment. At this day, neither of them stands in need of justification even on that score. The facts have already been submitted in the present chapter. They are supported by all the original documents connected with them, as found spread forth at large for the first time in other portions of this work. Upon these

materials it will be for impartial posterity to decide with whom the errors really rested, whether upon the accused or his accuser; and, even should it be possible to attach the slightest censure to the former, for doing what he firmly believed to be his duty, against the judgment of his nominal friends, whether such errors, followed by such fortunate consequences in the restoration of peace abroad and of quiet at home, were of so mischievous a kind as to establish the charge of unfitness for high station, which was the ostensible purpose of the attack.

As to the general imputation upon Mr. Adams of an impracticable spirit, which led him to act without the advice of his cabinet, and to rely solely on himself, as the caprice of the moment, rather than any fixed opinions, might dictate, its utter groundlessness is sufficiently shown by the publication now made of the secret papers and correspondence of his administration. By these it will appear, not only that he consulted the members of his cabinet constantly, and called for their written opinions upon almost every important question, but that he often adopted their conclusions in the very language which they proposed, in many cases, even at the sacrifice of his own. The few exceptions that occurred were those in which a concerted attempt was making by his ministers to overrule his known convictions upon matters of the most serious importance. In these instances he certainly did decline to call for opinions of which he knew the nature too well already, and he did take such a course as to defeat their efforts at counteraction, and to provide for the full execution of his own policy. The very fact that he acted with such consistency in reaching the desired results, is a sufficient answer to all the efforts to stigmatize him as wavering and uncertain. These charges originated rather in the hopes that he would fluctuate, gathered from the concessions the authors of them could wring out of his casual and unguarded conversation, and in the disappointment at discovering in his action no traces of the vacillation upon which they had counted. There is no doubt that, when not stirred by any emotion, Mr. Adams's disposition was easy and inclined to yield. If he committed any mistake, it was in conceding too much rather than too little to his ministers. The effect was to lead them on to attempts upon his independence, which they would scarcely have ventured on a character more outwardly stern, and from

which it was too late to retreat when they found him fully roused to their nature and to the necessity of defeating them. Thus it twice happened that the very moment when they felt the most sure of their success in controlling him, was exactly that when a single exercise of his will, to their great mortification, demolished their straw-built castles at a blow.

If any further answer were necessary to this charge, it might be found in the perfect harmony and efficiency of his cabinet after he had succeeded in organizing it to suit himself. With such men as John Marshall and Samuel Dexter for his counsellors, his system went on vigorously, partaking of the valuable fruits of the reflections of all, and jarred by no discord whatever. The motive for contention had been removed. Indulging in no wild dreams of overruling their chief for special purposes of their own, nothing remained to contend about, excepting which should most effectively serve the common cause. The effects are made visible in the steadiness of the policy pursued during the rest of the administration; and the nature of the intercourse appears in the private correspondence now published in this work.

With regard to the minor causes of complaint in Mr. Hamilton's pamphlet, which resolve themselves into natural imperfections of temper, and personal foibles, such as men of every grade in life are liable to, if it were conceded that the charges, instead of being greatly exaggerated, were just, to the full extent alleged, the fact would scarcely avail as an argument in the pending controversy, unless it could be proved that the consequences showed out in public conduct of a pernicious or shameful character. The great measures actually adduced, whether in their inception or in their execution, prove nothing of the kind. Even the calm Washington was not free from occasional bursts of violent passion, as nobody claimed more fully to know than Mr. Hamilton himself. For he is reported as authority for the statement, that so great had been the General's asperity of temper towards the close of the war, as very much to impair his popularity in the army.[1] That Mr. Adams was subject to the same infirmity, in a much greater degree, and with less power

[1] *Madison Papers*, vol. i. p. 351. The reason why Mr. Hamilton retired from his post of aid-de-camp to Washington is well known. Mr. Jefferson testifies to the same tendency in Washington.

of self-control, is unquestionable. But the traces of it are nowhere visible in the public acts of his life, in the records of his administration, or in his correspondence with his ministers. However warm his conversation may at times have been, in his action he never failed to be cool. One proof of this is that the issue of his measures so seldom failed to correspond to his calculations. And certainly neither the nomination of the commissioners to France nor the pardon of Fries can be said to form exceptions to this remark. Yet these two acts form the substance of Mr. Hamilton's charge of incapacity. Well will it be for any future chief magistrate, and well for the republic itself, if, during his term of office, nothing more dishonorable should ever be proved against him.

Neither is it essential, in this connection, to go into any elaborate defence of Mr. Adams from the other imputation, of inordinate vanity. Even conceding it to be true to the extent affirmed, it yet remained to prove how the manifestation of it had done any injury to the public. For of public action only was there, in this case, any question. Vanity is a foible which may unpleasantly affect the relations of men with each other in social life, but there are plenty of cases in history to show that it is not incompatible with the possession of the very highest qualities of character and the noblest attributes of statesmanship. Nobody at this day will dispute the fact that Cicero, in his writings, shows himself, in this particular, among the weakest of men. Yet it is quite as undeniable that he will forever rank in the very first class of orators and statesmen, of thinkers and writers and actors, among men.[1] Neither is it necessary to go further for an illustration than to the very case of Mr. Hamilton himself. Singularly enough, one of his most devoted friends has left on record his testimony as well of his own sense, as of that of many others at the time, of Hamilton's betrayal, in this very publication, of the same fault which he was so prompt to charge upon Mr. Adams.[2] Yet nobody will

[1] The remarks of the historian Niebuhr upon this trait of Cicero's character are of universal application, and are well deserving of consideration by generous minds. *Lectures on the History of Rome*, edited by Dr. Schmitz, vol. iii. pp. 24, 25.

[2] "I am bound to tell you that you are accused, by respectable men, of egotism; and some very worthy and sensible men say, you have exhibited the same *vanity* in your book, which you charge as a dangerous quality and great weakness in Mr. Adams. Cabot to Hamilton. *Works of Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 482.

be disposed to question, on that account, Mr. Hamilton's abilities to play a great part in public affairs. To dwell more at large on this branch of the attack, seems to be superfluous. For were it all exactly as is affirmed, instead of being much exaggerated, the whole would not go very far to establish the fact that Mr. Adams could not, nevertheless, be, at the same time, a wise, an energetic, an independent, and an honest President.[1]

This publication was not received with approbation by the public or by the federalists. The press teemed with replies, all written with more or less vigor, and some not unfelt by Mr. Hamilton himself.[2] His most ardent friends, McHenry, Ames, and Cabot, reported to him, the last-named so candidly and faithfully that he anticipated the loss of his friendship from it, the nature of the censure he had incurred. All felt that if he had succeeded in pulling down Mr. Adams from his eminence, it had been done only by bringing in ruins with him the pillars of the federal structure. If this consideration filled the members of one party with grief, it correspondingly exalted their opponents. So fluctuating had been their confidence in their power to overthrow Mr. Adams, that even their sanguine chief had more than once entertained the notion of abandoning opposition to him, and directing the strength of his party to the question of the succession. But this pamphlet did more to invigorate them than all their own efforts. A curious admission of this fact, made under his own hand, by one of the most active partisans in the struggle, has recently found its way back from the other side of the Atlantic. In transmitting a copy to his friend, General Collot, who had fled to Paris from a threatened application of the Alien Law, not without justice in his case, the editor of the Philadelphia Aurora, the most efficient

[1] For the same reason it has not been deemed necessary to enlarge upon some minor errors of fact which occur in the course of the pamphlet; nor to touch upon the use made of the accidental publication at the moment of Mr. Adams's private letter to Tench Coxe, dated eight years before, in which he had inadvertently done some injustice to Thomas Pinckney. That injustice he had amply repaired by a public letter before he saw this pamphlet or any extracts from it. A memorandum to this effect, dated the 27th of October, 1800, is written by his own hand on his copy of the pamphlet.

[2] Mr. Hamilton thought of answering them, but was deterred from it by his friends. *Works of Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 477. *Gibbs's Fed. Adm.* vol. ii. pp. 448, 454.

press in the service of the opposition, wrote the following note, on the 3d of November: —

"Citizen General, — This pamphlet has done more mischief to the parties concerned than all the labors of the *Aurora*.
William Duane."[1]

Nor yet was it among the least singular of the consequences attending this strange history, that the pamphlet should have been fatal to the prospects of the very person whom it was originally designed to aid, and should have elevated the author's most bitter and deadly enemy in his place. As in the case of Thomas Pinckney, who lost the Vice-Presidency by Mr. Hamilton's interference at the preceding election, so Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, on the present occasion, was cut off, in the same way, from the opportunity of arriving fairly at one of the two highest stations. Without possessing abilities of the first class, General Pinckney had owed the respect which followed him in life quite as much to his integrity and nice sense of personal honor, as to the creditable manner in which he acquitted himself of his duties. This might have secured for him from the legislature of his native State, a repetition of the experiment which had been made in favor of his brother at the preceding election, a union of his name with that of Mr. Jefferson as the choice of the two candidates of the Electoral College. Had such a union been actually made, the effect would have been his elevation certainly to the second office, and perhaps even to the first. That it was not made, was very much owing to the decision of General Pinckney himself. Unwilling to subject himself to the remotest suspicion of bad faith, after the reception of Mr. Hamilton's pamphlet admitted of a possible inference of collusion, he insisted upon standing or falling upon the same ticket inseparably with Mr. Adams.[2] The consequence was that the federalists would enter into no coalition,

[1] This pamphlet, with the note attached, and some other tracts, bound in a volume once belonging to Collot, was brought from France, since the commencement of this work, by one of its publishers, the late James Brown, and is now in the possession of the author.

[2] One of Mr. Hamilton's most ardent friends, General Gunn, of Georgia, seems to lament that this double treachery had not been committed. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 483.

and Thomas Jefferson was enabled to secure seven votes to Aaron Burr, the ubiquitous evil genius of the author of the pamphlet himself.

Under the circumstances in which the parties went into the election, with the federalists divided among themselves, and with little heart or hope, the cause of surprise is that they should have come so near success as they did. The loss of the election in the city of New York, in the month of May preceding, had determined the votes in the legislature of that State for Mr. Jefferson. But even this would not have turned the scale, had South Carolina, which hung in suspense, proved true. Both results were arrived at through the cool astuteness of Aaron Burr, profiting by the excessive self-reliance of Mr. Hamilton. In truth, the latter was no match for his opponent in the game to which he had lent himself. With abilities beyond comparison higher, and aspirations the magnitude of which alone gave him far superior dignity, he only failed in sufficiently measuring the descent he was making when he entered upon the arena of partisan intrigue on the same level with his arch-enemy. The source of this error is to be traced to a deficiency in early moral foundations, the effects of which, here and there, make themselves visible, breaking out of the folds of a noble nature throughout his career, but especially towards its close. It was this which substituted the false idol of honor, as worshipped in the society of his day, for the eternal law of God; which impelled him to justify himself against a charge of peculation of the public money at the expense of a public confession of what to him seemed the more venial offence of aiding to corrupt an immortal soul; which led him into the clandestine relations with the cabinet officers of Mr. Adams, and the ultimate breach of confidence he made such awkward attempts to hide; which prompted that application to the upright John Jay, marked by the latter with so significant a condemnation;[1] and, lastly, which, in the vain idea of the importance to his ulterior schemes, of retaining the regards of superficial men, drove him, against his most solemn convictions of duty, to the act that presented him unanealed for the final sentence of his Maker.

[1] Jay's *Life of John Jay*, vol. i. p. 414.

In the election, the event which one section of the federalists had anxiously desired, an equality of the votes between Mr. Adams and Mr. Pinckney, did not happen, by reason of the refusal of Arthur Fenner, of Rhode Island, to sacrifice Mr. Adams. But the same thing did happen where it was not desired, and where no labor had been spent to bring it about, that is on the side which supported Mr. Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Each of these gentlemen received seventy-three votes, or three votes more than the number necessary for a choice. This did not point out who was to be President; so that the task of choosing between the two devolved upon the House of Representatives, a numerical majority of whom belonged to the federal side, although not a majority, when counted by States, according to the mode prescribed by the constitution for this election. Of course, Mr. Adams was now out of the question. He had nothing more to look forward to than the dreary pageant of three months which the constitution requires every President to enact after substantial power has departed from him.

The first sign of dissolution was the dropping away of the decayed limbs. So soon as General Pinckney was supposed to have failed, the scruples which had haunted the mind of Mr. Wolcott, about holding his office under Mr. Adams, returned with force. On the 8th of November, he addressed to the President a letter of resignation, which was to take effect at the close of the year, that is, about sixty days before the expiration of Mr. Adams's own term. He was not ashamed to add something about affording him suitable time to designate a successor to the official crumbs which he was disposed to leave unconsumed. So adroitly had he conducted himself, that Mr. Adams, though aware of his devotion to the views of Mr. Hamilton, had never ranged him in his mind in the same category with Colonel Pickering or McHenry. To the day of his death he always excepted him from the suspicions of bad faith, which he entertained of the others. Recent disclosures, however, place him in much the most sombre position of the three. From the day of the departure of his comrades, he remained the only person of the cabinet in secret relations with Mr. Hamilton. Not deterred by their dismissal, he seems to have used the warning only to labor the harder to cover the traces of his industrious

treachery. His efforts to betray and disgrace his chief, as well by stimulating the disaffection of others wherever he could, as by supplying and revising the materials for the vindictive assault of Mr. Hamilton, are now before the world. It is no part of the present design to dwell upon them further than is necessary to show how deeply Mr. Adams was wronged by this behavior. One of the favorite modes of detraction resorted to by him and his associates was to describe his chief as unreasonably jealous and suspicious. How little he deserved this at the hands of Mr. Wolcott will now appear. Towards the last days of his official term, Mr. Adams, remembering that his old secretary had retired under no favorable pecuniary circumstances, fixed upon him, though long removed from practice in the courts, as a suitable recipient of the life-long post of judge of the circuit court of the United States, under the law freshly passed for the reorganization of the courts. He did this without prompting or suggestion from any one, out of personal regard, and in the overflowing confidence of his heart in one whom he believed to have been faithful to him, and honorable in all his dealings. Mr. Wolcott betrayed no sensitive delicacy in accepting this most unmerited reward. He did not look back upon the secret letters which might, some day, show him to the world as he really was. He confessed nothing, but cheerfully took the gift from the hand of the man he had so sedulously labored to destroy. In his letter of acknowledgment he promised a change at least for the future. "Believing," said he, "that gratitude to benefactors is among the most amiable, and ought to be among the most indissoluble of social obligations, I shall, without reserve, cherish the emotions which are inspired by a sense of duty and honor on this occasion." There is reason to suppose that from that date to the end of his life, he kept this promise; for letters down to a late period remain among Mr. Adams's papers as evidence to show it. Had it not been for the revival of the memory of these events, in the most painful form of partisan harshness towards Mr. Adams, by the publication of Mr. Wolcott's papers, this exposition, unwillingly made, and based almost exclusively upon the testimony therein furnished, would never have been needed.

The second session of the sixth congress began on the 22d of November, with a speech from the President, destined to be

his last. It is remarkable as more exclusively his own work than any of its predecessors. The exordium, which is brief and dignified, alludes in suitable terms to the inauguration of the new seat of government at Washington, where the different departments of government were now for the first time assembled.

"May this territory," he said, "be the residence of virtue and happiness! In this city may that piety and virtue, that wisdom and magnanimity, that constancy and self-government, which adorned the great character whose name it bears, be forever held in veneration! Here, and throughout our country, may simple manners, pure morals, and true religion flourish forever!"

Recommending to the care of congress the territory thus consecrated, he proceeded to give a summary of the relations of the country with foreign nations, and of the state of the negotiations yet pending with Great Britain and France. A treaty of amity and commerce had been concluded with Prussia. Turning from thence to the view of domestic affairs, he touched upon the reduction effected of the military organization, recommended further measures for the establishment of a defensive naval force, and dwelt with some urgency on the necessity of amending the judiciary system. He congratulated the House of Representatives upon the prosperous condition of the revenue during the year, the amount received exceeding that of any former equal period, and concluded with the following somewhat significant exhortation: —

"As one of the grand community of nations, our attention is irresistibly drawn to the important scenes which surround us. If they have exhibited an uncommon portion of calamity, it is the province of humanity to deplore, and of wisdom to avoid the causes which may have produced it. If, turning our eyes homeward, we find reason to rejoice at the prospect which presents itself; if we perceive the interior of our country prosperous, free and happy; if all enjoy in safety, under the protection of laws emanating only from the general will, the fruits of their own labor, we ought to fortify and cling to those institutions which have been the source of much real felicity, and resist with unabating perseverance the progress of those dangerous innovations which may diminish their influence."

This picture of the state of the country was not in the least exaggerated. The trying crisis caused by the French revolution was now over, and the people were just beginning to feel the prosperity, which was about to come upon them in a flood. All that was needed was peace, and this was on the point of being secured to them. The great responsibility which Mr. Adams had assumed, was completely redeemed by the event. The neutrality of the country was saved. A few weeks brought the tidings of the success of the much denounced commission to France, in framing a convention. Straggling murmurs against the insufficiency of its provisions from some of the malcontents availed nothing against the general disposition to accept it as a terminator of all differences. Only one important objection was raised to it. The second article annulled the old treaties containing the guarantee that had proved so troublesome, but it left the question of indemnities on both sides for past grievances, as a matter to be settled at some more convenient time. This involved on the one side the question of compensation for surrender of the guarantee, and on the other the indemnity for injuries done by the spoliations upon American commerce, during the violence of the revolution. The Senate, not content to leave open a source of future dissensions, ratified the treaty, with the exception of this article, which they desired to have expunged, and of the substitution of a provision that it should be in force for eight years. The President accepted the ratification in this form, but not without leaving on record his own opinion, that the treaty was better as it originally stood. Further negotiations became necessary. Assent to the required modifications was readily obtained from Napoleon, but it was saddled with a little proviso the effect of which went far to prove the correctness of the President's opinion. It was in these words: "Provided that by this retrenchment the two States renounce the respective pretensions, which are the object of the said article." This little condition abandoned the rights of reclamation to the amount of twenty or thirty millions of dollars, for the most unjustifiable robberies of private property ever committed by a civilized nation. The United States obtained from this abandonment of the claims of some of their citizens a great benefit; but to this day those citizens and their descendants have had no reason to draw any favorable distinc-

tion between the parties abroad who originally did the wrong, and those at home who profited by sacrificing their rights, and who yet withhold from them even the most trifling compensation. Very fortunately for Mr. Adams, this, the only stain which attaches to that negotiation, does not rest upon his garments.

Two domestic events of note mark this session. The first was the election of a President of the United States for the first time by the House of Representatives. The second was the passage of an act to reorganize the judicial system of the Union.

In the first case it has been already stated, that the choice was confined between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. There was not a doubt in the mind of a single member, which of the two the popular will intended to make the President. There should not have been a doubt which should be preferred. Yet such is the strength of party passions, when once roused, that no calculation of what will be done can ever be based upon merely abstract considerations of expediency or of right. The federalists controlled the voices of six States, and they neutralized two more. There were sixteen States, nine of whom were necessary to elect. But Mr. Jefferson had only eight in his favor. He therefore could not be chosen without their assent express or implied. It was enough that they had the power to change the result, for them to be tempted to use it. The combined fear and hatred of Mr. Jefferson, who seemed to many of them the type of destruction to every thing valuable on earth, perhaps not unmingled with a hope of making terms not absolutely unfavorable to a revival of their own influence, led them, as a choice of evils, to give the preference to Mr. Burr. The violation of the spirit of a popular election, by a perversion of its forms, had been already made so familiar to them by the sanction of Mr. Hamilton, that they were little moved by his remonstrances, now that they were earnestly applied to prevent this to him very unwelcome result. Such is not infrequently the consequence of such a departure from sound principle to serve a temporary end.

Mr. Hamilton was not averse to any refinement of policy short of actually electing Mr. Burr. He wrote to Mr. Wolcott, that it might "be well enough to throw out a lure for him, in order to tempt him to start for the plate, and then lay the founda-

tion of dissension between the two chiefs.[1] But further than this, he was unwilling to go. There can be no doubt that in this scruple he was right. But he could not fail to foresee that in case of Burr's success he could have no hope of exercising more control over either the chief or those who had elected him than he would have done under Mr. Adams. To him Burr was the most formidable of all opponents, because he lived on his own ground, and baffled him at every turn. But the federalists being mostly from the Northern States, sympathized the more with Burr for that very reason. Parties rarely spend the time in refining. If it was allowable to "throw out a lure to Mr. Burr," the step was easy to giving him a vote. Thus it happened that the federal members took a course, success in which would have proved a misfortune, and wherein failure sunk them forever in the public esteem. Notwithstanding the election of Mr. Jefferson was effected at last by the honest scruples of some, and the timidity of others, who withdrew their opposition, that triumph gave so great an impulse to the victors, that no credit was ever awarded to those through whom it was attained. In all such political strokes, no medium is to be found between success and utter ruin. The great federal party which had shed so much lustre over the inauguration of the new government, which claimed Washington as its solar orb, and a host of the best and greatest of the revolutionary heroes as its lesser lights, sunk in obscurity and disgrace, martyrs to the false and immoral maxim, that the end will sometimes justify bad means.

It is one of the inconveniences attending the elective forms of the federal government, that every fourth year must be wasted in the process of transition from one administration to another. Most especially is this true, when the change becomes at the same time a change of parties. The acting President is then left scarcely strong enough to preserve the ordinary course of business. This inconvenience was most seriously felt by Mr. Adams. The desertion of Mr. Wolcott rendered it impossible to find a person, not already in office, willing to occupy the post of Secretary of the Treasury for only two months; and what was true in that case was equally true in every other, the tenure of which was subject to be terminated

[1] Hamilton to Wolcott. *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 486.

by the incoming President. As a consequence, Mr. Dexter was transferred to the treasury from the war department, whilst the latter was left temporarily under the same charge. There was, however, one class of exceptions to this rule. The federalists, who still held the power in both Houses, alarmed by the prospect of having Mr. Jefferson at the head of affairs, a man whose opinions respecting the judiciary were supposed to be radical in the extreme, determined upon carrying into effect the other measure of this session, already alluded to, the reorganization of the federal courts. This had been often and repeatedly urged by the executive, and was really called for by the changes that had taken place in the population and circumstances of the country. The union of the duties of riding a circuit with those attached to a seat upon the supreme bench, whilst it has some advantages, has, in a wide-spread land and under cumulative litigation, objections which become more and more serious with the progress of time. It must sooner or later be abandoned. The new act reduced the number of justices of the supreme court in future, and increased the district courts to twenty-three, arranged into six circuits to be travelled by three judges in each. It was not in itself ill devised for the purposes intended, but it happened quite unfortunately that it established a large number of offices with a life-tenure, which were to be filled.

Had the President determined to withhold the appointments, in such a manner as to give the nomination to his successor, a serious difficulty might have been avoided, and the irritation, which ultimately effected the repeal of the act, prevented. Had he been, what the violent federalists not infrequently in their private correspondence say he was, disposed to court his opponents, nothing would have been more easy than to have secured their good-will by a simple omission to act. This course would have been under all circumstances the most advisable. But Mr. Adams, once entertaining the most friendly feelings toward Mr. Jefferson, had had his faith in his principles greatly shaken in the contests of the preceding twelve years, and most especially in regard to his disposition towards the judiciary. He fully believed that the control he might obtain over the courts, by filling them with the extreme men among his followers, would endanger the safety of the government

itself. He therefore viewed the power placed in his hands as one which it was a paramount duty to exercise, for the best good of the Union. The last days of the session were therefore spent in a laborious effort to select from the great number of candidates recommended, such as seemed the most capable, honest, and firm to fill these seats.

It naturally followed, that members of the federal party were generally appointed. Mr. Jefferson resented this more than any other act of Mr. Adams's life. But in view of the events which followed his entry into office, the attack made upon the courts, as well as the particular assaults upon several of its officers through the forms of impeachment, it may well be questioned whether the vehement contest on the incidental question of the repeal of this new law, did not prove a shelter to the general system, and ensure it the stability which it has enjoyed ever since. Almost at the same time happened the resignation by Mr. Ellsworth of his high post of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Mr. Adams immediately offered the place to John Jay, then Governor of New York; and, upon his declining it on account of his health, he tendered it to John Marshall, his Secretary of State. These appointments excited dissatisfaction on both sides of him. The ultra federalists murmured at the nomination of Jay as useless, and complained that Patterson had been overlooked in order to reward a favorite; the opposition, that the strongest opponent of their chief in Virginia had been set as a check over him. But looking back upon the events of the first half of this century, and upon the combination of qualities, requisite to fill that most responsible and difficult post in such a manner as to consolidate instead of weakening the Union, it is scarcely possible for the most prejudiced man to deny that the selection by John Adams of John Marshall to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States was, for its political consequences, second in importance only to that virtually made by the same individual, twenty-five years earlier, of George Washington, as commander-in-chief of their armies.

Thus terminated the official life of Mr. Adams. His Presidency had been one long and severe trial, in the course of which it was his lot to have his firmness and independence of spirit put to the test for the fourth time in his career, under circumstances more appalling than ever before. For the first time

his own popularity sunk completely under the shock. He retired disgraced in the popular estimation, and his name became a by-word of odium for many years. But he had fully redeemed the pledge into which he entered with himself at the commencement of his career, to "act a fearless, intrepid, undaunted part," though not forgetting "likewise to act a prudent, cautious, and considerate part."[1] And never was a union of these qualities more exemplified than during this administration, in the course of which his inflexible courage had saved the neutral policy, and had removed the obstacles which threatened the prosperity of the nation at the moment that he took the helm.

[1] See the Diary for the 24th May, 1773, vol. ii. p. 320.

CHAPTER XI.

RETIREMENT FROM PUBLIC LIFE — OCCUPATIONS — RELATIONS WITH JEFFERSON — DEATH.

ON the 4th of March, 1801, the day upon which Mr. Jefferson was inaugurated President of the United States, Mr. Adams retired from public life, after an uninterrupted course of service of six and twenty years, in a greater variety of trusts than fell to the share of any other American of his time. He had gone through all of them with acknowledged credit to himself and honor to the country, excepting the last, and in that he felt that by a concurrence of adverse circumstances he was visited with censure which neither his motives nor his acts had merited. Sensitive and ardent in his temperament, he would not wait to be present at the installation of his successor, or to exchange the customary forms of civility in transferring the office. In this course, as not consistent with true dignity, or with the highest class of Christian virtue, he was perhaps wrong. It certainly would have been more politic to have made professions of confidence in Mr. Jefferson. But that was not his way, when he did not entertain them. He shared strongly in the distrust universal among the federalists, of that gentleman's intentions, and he believed, not without color of reason, that he had acted somewhat disingenuously towards himself. This was a strong motive for declining to be present at the inauguration, but it was not by any means the only one. Had the party which elected him really made him its head; had it stood unitedly and cordially by him in the policy which he had felt it his duty to prefer, he believed that he should never have been exposed to the necessity of any such trial. But even if, in spite of every exertion, defeat had followed, with a united support, the exultation of the victors might have been easily endured, as an inevitable concomitant of the chances of the popular

favor. Such had not been the case. He felt that his most bitter enemies had been of his own household, whom he had offended because he would not submit to be a mere instrument to execute a policy, which he could not approve. Although he did not even then suspect the extent to which he had been circumvented, he knew enough to convince him that he had been a victim of treachery, and that, as such, he must, if he remained, be shown up before both his opponents and his friends. Many of his own side, who had arraigned his policy and attributed to it their overthrow, would draw some consolation to themselves from seeing him pay any penalty, however severe, for having pursued it. Of these a considerable number were in the Senate, friends of the individual who had destroyed him. To them, then, as well as to Mr. Jefferson's followers he was to be made a spectacle, if he should stay to be a part of the pageant. No. His proud spirit would not endure it. He would not consent to enact the captive chief in the triumphant procession of the victor to the capitol.

But in addition to this, there were other and better reasons for desiring to escape a burdensome ceremonial. The state of his feelings at home was not in harmony with such a scene. He had just passed through the first severe domestic affliction of his life. His second son, Charles, who had grown up to manhood, had been married, and settled in the city of New York with fair prospects of success, had but a few weeks before breathed his last, leaving a wife and two infant children as his only legacy to his father's care. In a note, addressed to Mr. Jefferson, who had opened a letter relating to the matter, which had come by mistake to him after his accession, but which he transmitted unread, Mr. Adams feelingly alludes to this. "Had you read the papers inclosed," he said, "they might have given you a moment of melancholy, or, at least, of sympathy with a mourning father. They related wholly to the funeral of a son, who was once the delight of my eyes, and a darling of my heart, cut off in the flower of his days, amidst very flattering prospects, by causes which have been the greatest grief of my heart, and the deepest affliction of my life." In the state of mind here described, gloomy from the combined pressure of public and private evils, it surely cannot be matter for much wonder that he should resolve to avoid a situation in which

his presence would be a severe trial to himself and of no compensating advantage to any one. Yet he was much censured for this act, at the time, by those who knew nothing of the circumstances, and who saw in it only a pettish sally of mortified ambition.

Upon his return to Massachusetts, the legislature, representing a large number of the people of his own State, who for more than twenty years had not swerved for a moment in their confidence in Mr. Adams, and who saw no reason to withdraw it now, adopted the following address, which was carried out and presented to him at his residence in Quincy by the presiding officers of the two Houses, attended by a numerous escort.

"TO JOHN ADAMS.

"At the moment, Sir, that you are descending from the exalted station of the first magistrate of the American nation, to mingle with the mass of your fellow-citizens, the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, your native State, embrace the occasion to pour forth the free-will offering of their sincere thanks for the many important and arduous services you have rendered your country.

In the performance of this act, the legislature have but one heart, and that vibrates with affection, respect, and gratitude for your virtues, talents, and patriotism.

We conceive it unnecessary to detail the character of him, whose life from earliest manhood has been eminently devoted to the public good. This will be the delightful employment of the faithful and able historian.

Our posterity will critically compare the illustrious characters which have elevated the condition of man, and dignified civil society, through the various ages of the world, and will, with grateful effusions and conscious pride, point to that of their beloved countryman.

The period of the administration of our general government, under the auspices of Washington and Adams, will be considered as among the happiest eras of time. The example of their integrity possesses a moral and political value, which no calculation can reach, and will be justly estimated as a standard for future Presidents of the United States.

We receive you, Sir, with open arms, esteem and veneration; confidently hoping that you will possess undisturbed those blessings of domestic retirement, which great minds always appreciate and enjoy with dignity.

We devoutly supplicate the Father of the Universe, that you may realize, while you continue on earth, all the happiness of which human nature is susceptible; and when your course shall be finished here, that your spirit may receive the transcendent rewards of the just." [1]

The next year, his fellow-citizens in his own town of Quincy seized the occasion of his birthday to pay their respects to him, and to offer the following affectionate address: —

"Sir, — The return of this anniversary cannot fail to awaken in our breasts the warmest sentiments of gratitude and esteem. It recalls to view the many important events of your public life, events intimately connected with those principles and proceedings which constitute the greatest glory of our country, and which will form some of the most valuable pages in the history of nations.

We hope the liberty we have taken in personally waiting upon you on this occasion will not be deemed an intrusion. And while we offer you our respectful congratulations, we must beg you to be assured that this visit is the result of feeling and not of ceremony.

The early and decided part which you took in support of the liberties of America; the series of patriotic and successful exertions, which distinguished you the firm, unwavering, and able friend of these States; the many stations of high responsibility which you filled so much to the advantage of your fellow-citizens throughout our Revolution, gave you an honorable title to their veneration and love.

But your services to your country did not end with the accomplishment of our Independence. Since that period, it has required, and you have devoted to its cause, the energies of your comprehensive mind. Your civil administration as President of the United States, at a crisis of peculiar difficulty and

[1] The answer to this address is printed in vol. ix. p. 236.

danger, warded off evils which seemed inevitable, and secured blessings that appeared unattainable. It vindicated the national honor, accommodated serious differences with two of the most powerful nations of Europe, and left the United States, with the means of a speedy extinction of the public debt, a full treasury, and a flourishing commerce, to cultivate the arts of peace.

May these things be ever held in suitable remembrance. May no untoward circumstances wholly take away the fair prospect we have had of national prosperity and greatness. For you, Sir, we offer our supplications to the Sovereign of the Universe, that your invaluable life may be long preserved. In any critical conjuncture of affairs, may your countrymen yet have the benefit of that foresight, wisdom, and experience which have so often availed and supported them. And when you shall finally be called to bid adieu to this world and its concerns, may the cheering words promised to the good and the faithful, hail you to the mansions of blessedness."

October 30, 1802.

But with the exception of a few manifestations of this kind, the seclusion into which Mr. Adams was at once plunged, at his farm in Quincy, was profound in the extreme. No more striking proof of it remains than his correspondence. The letters addressed to him in the year prior to the 4th of March, 1801, may be counted by thousands. Those of the next year scarcely number a hundred, and he wrote even less than he received. A few old and tried friends sent kind expressions of their warm regard, which he acknowledged in the same spirit, but the crowd who had solicited favors, so long as there were any to grant, moved on according to immemorial usage, towards the newly-created fountain of supply. Such are the vicissitudes of statesmen, as well under the forms of republican America, as in the courts of kings. To Mr. Adams, however, this change was most trying as a transition from a state of the utmost intellectual activity to one of the most sluggish repose. For years before, he had looked forward to the event not without some misgivings as to the possible effect upon his health. But now that at last it was come, he addressed himself with such courage as he might to the resumption of the private occupations within

his reach. And, first of all, he naturally looked back to the early fancy of his life, from which he had never been weaned by other avocations, abroad or at home, however numerous or important. All the fortune he had inherited or succeeded in acquiring, had been invested in the lands around him. These he set about cultivating and improving; and they furnished his main support for the remainder of his days. At first, under the stimulus of the attack of Mr. Hamilton, he devoted some time to the preparation of a reply; and the next year he entered upon a project of an extended autobiography; but neither of these schemes retained its attraction sufficiently to reach completion. Although invited, in many forms, by the authorities of the State and of the neighboring town of Boston to attend upon public occasions, he accepted them only when it would have been uncivil to do otherwise. His indisposition to take part in new political questions was so decided, that it is scarcely likely it would have been ever overcome, but for one accidental circumstance. He had a son, who had already entered upon a brilliant public career, and whose position was rapidly becoming a prominent one in the contentions of the times.

A detailed examination of the events of this period, as connected with the career of this son, is not within the scope of this work. They will be touched upon, therefore, only so far as may be necessary to explain their effect upon the situation of Mr. Adams during the remainder of his life. From the day of Mr. Jefferson's accession, the federalists, disheartened by the division in their own ranks, and discredited by the failure of the attempt to elect Mr. Burr, gave up united exertion. Mr. Marshall, the representative of one form of opinion, had become chief justice of the supreme court. Mr. Jay, at the close of his term of service as Governor of New York, voluntarily retired into private life. Upon Mr. Adams the whole odium of the party defeat had been concentrated by the victors, with the new President at their head. No prominent man remained, excepting Alexander Hamilton, and he was considered rather as the type of one section than of the whole party. Yet under him rallied the only considerable fragment that kept together after the great defeat. It was composed, in the main, of persons in New England and New York, leaning to extremes in opinion, and with difficulty withheld from violent courses even

by the dissuasive counsels[1] of him in whom they placed most confidence. Yet even he appeared to be only counselling delay in order the more completely "to reserve himself for those crises in the public affairs which seemed likely to happen," when the vindictive spirit of Aaron Burr, irritated by his haughty yet officious enmity, took advantage of an indiscreet remark made by him at a public meeting, to force him into the field of combat in which he fell. Thus it happened that in 1804 all those persons who could be regarded in any general sense as heads of opposition to the new administration were removed from the scene, at the same time that a treaty with France was negotiated, by which the splendid acquisition of Louisiana was secured to the Union. Neither did the attempt to stir up strife within the ranks of the victorious party avail to impair the authority of the new President. It fared no better in the hands of the disaffected Burr, meditating mysterious projects of a new empire in the west, than in those of John Randolph, discontented by the want of deference to his unreasonable demands. The consequence was a perfect consolidation of the power of the new government, the reëlection of Mr. Jefferson by the votes of all the electors excepting fourteen, and the ability to entail the succession to the Presidency at the end of his second term, upon the person of James Madison, his confidential friend and long-tried coadjutor.

Under this process the federalists crumbled away until few traces remained of the once powerful association, south or west of the Hudson. The moderate men, despairing of its revival, either withdrew from public action altogether or permitted themselves to sink into the ranks of the majority. Neither was this tendency altogether imperceptible in New England, where the federal ascendency had been the most marked, and where it yet maintained itself. But the withdrawal of Mr. Adams, which had thrown the direction of the party into the hands of that portion of it known to be particularly associated with Mr. Hamilton, threatened to deprive it of a considerable share of strength, obtained from the popular confidence reposed in his character and services. Mr. Hamilton, in his exploring journey before the

[1] See his letter to Theodore Sedgwick, *Hamilton's Works*, vol. vi. p. 567. This was just before his death. Allusion is there made to a longer and more full exposition of his views, which may yet be in existence.

election, had come to the conclusion that although the "strong-minded men" were generally in sympathy with himself, those of the second class and the body of the people were too much disposed to follow Mr. Adams.[1] The consciousness of this had been the cause of the great reluctance manifested by Hamilton's friends to the open hostility which he had thought it proper to declare.[2] And after the election was decided, it still prompted an avoidance of any enlargement of the breach then made. The friends of the new government were too numerous to render it advisable to hazard the alienation of a single person who could be in any way induced to continue in opposition. Enmity to Mr. Jefferson was a common bond still to be relied on to keep together those who might entertain few other sentiments in unison. Hence, bitterly as they continued to feel towards the person who had rejected their advice, and whom, for that reason, they had sought in secret to destroy, the "strong-minded men" deemed it expedient to avoid every occasion for pushing further the differences that had already taken place.[3]

So far as John Adams was concerned, no motive remained to do so. He had determined upon absolute retirement from public life and all its concerns, and had declared this intention in his reply to the address of the Massachusetts legislature.[4] But there yet remained a representative of him in the field whose position and influence it was not easy to disregard, or prudent to overlook. Mr. Adams's eldest son, John Quincy Adams, the companion of his voyages, and of his European life, after eight years of creditable service in diplomatic stations abroad, which had removed him from all the scenes of contentious politics at home, had returned to Massachusetts, with a reputation for abilities, character, and learning exceeded by that of no one of his generation in the commonwealth. The claims of such a man upon the popular confidence, it was dangerous to

[1] A. Hamilton to Carroll. *Works of A. Hamilton*, vol. vi. p. 446.

[2] "There are three parties in the United States." So said Mr. Ames, in 1800, and the observation is worth remembering throughout American history since 1789.

[3] "We must keep united, and keep the public with us."
Fisher Ames's Works, vol. i. p. 291.

[4] Some of the federalists appear to have apprehended a different intention. *Ibid.*

neglect. Yet it is not possible to imagine that those persons who had been engaged in the clandestine movements to betray the father, even to the limited extent as yet laid open to the public eye, could be likely to entertain much cordiality in advancing the son. For they could scarcely fail to impute to him some share of filial indignation for the manner in which he knew that his father had been treated. Yet in the ardor of their hostility to Mr. Jefferson, they were ready to overlook a great deal. Besides, the alienation of Mr. Adams might be more dangerous to their ascendency than an attempt to conciliate him by a show of confidence. So they acquiesced in a policy of union, which, whilst it conceded a certain share of support to him, might secure in return a union of the more moderate men upon persons holding opinions like their own. It was in this spirit that Mr. Adams was brought forward in the autumn of 1802 as a candidate for a seat in the House of Representatives, in the Boston District, whilst Colonel Pickering, the most vehement of his father's enemies, was presented in the same way to the county of Essex. Such coalitions are seldom hearty, especially at first. This one did not prove so. The people appeared indifferent, and neither candidate was chosen. Mr. Adams failed by less than sixty, Colonel Pickering by about a hundred votes.

But though defeated here, an opportunity very soon occurred when the same policy of equivalents could be carried out more successfully in another form. Two vacancies occurred at once in the Senate of the United States. The two branches of the Legislature which were to fill them contained a great number of intermediate men. An attempt to push Colonel Pickering through proved unsuccessful, and a perseverance in it threatened to be followed by the election of an opponent. Under these circumstances recourse was had to Mr. Adams,[1] then himself a member of the State Senate, and understood not to be manageable, as a party man. By assenting to his election to one of the places, a way was made for the attain-

[1] Mr. Ames's testimony on this point is decisive. "They say also Mr. Adams is too unmanageable. Yet he is chosen Senator to congress in consequence of a caucus compact, that if Colonel Pickering should not be elected on two trials, then the federalists would combine and vote for J. Q. Adams. This happened accordingly." *Works of Fisher Ames*, vol. i. p. 321.

ment of the other by Colonel Pickering. The consequence was the election of the two to sit as colleagues representing Massachusetts in the federal Senate. A more incongruous mixture could scarcely be conceived. It was plain that the smouldering fires had been covered for the moment, only to kindle into a fiercer conflagration upon occasion of the first conflict of opinion which might spring out of the disturbed condition of public affairs.

Neither was that occasion long wanting. So long as Mr. Jefferson's domestic policy was in question, and the effort to break down the judiciary, first, by the repeal of the organic law of 1801, and afterwards by the successive impeachments of judges, was continued, there was no risk of a division. But when the country became involved in new difficulties from the warfare waged among the European powers, the course to be pursued was not so clear. The place in which the injury was most felt was upon the high seas, and those who suffered were the eastern commercial States carrying on a profitable neutral trade. The temper of the belligerents had not been softened by the peace of Amiens, and the resumption of arms became the signal for a course of retaliatory warfare unexampled in any former contest. To America this was hurtful, as a neutral power having rights of trade with each side which were too often disregarded by the other. But of the two the action of Great Britain was by far the most irritating, because her maritime supremacy came the most directly into collision with American commerce. Her revival of the rule of '56, for the express object of cutting off a profitable neutral trade with the colonies of her enemy, occasioned the capture and condemnation of many vessels.

Yet unpleasant as were the relations made by these events they would scarcely have caused a breach, had they not been followed up by the claim of a right to search American national ships for deserters, and to seize any persons who might be designated as British-born subjects. It was the case of the frigate Chesapeake boarded by the officers of The Leopard, who took out of her, in a most arrogant and insulting manner, four of her men, which justly roused the indignation of the people of the United States. At this day, it is difficult to understand how there could have been a moment's difference of opinion on

the necessity of resenting so insolent an assumption. Yet the fact cannot be controverted that the disposition to do it was much less strong in the commercial region, the citizens of which were immediately liable to suffer from it, than in the purely agricultural sections of the interior. There were even found leading men disposed to excuse, if not to defend, the pretensions of Great Britain. The times were not favorable to the decision of any point of public policy solely upon its merits. The violent opponents of Mr. Jefferson were disposed to see in every act of his towards England a disposition to play into the hands of Napoleon, then believed by them to be meditating the subjection of the world; whilst, on the other hand, these suspicions were met with a counter belief that those who were willing to overlook such aggressions secretly meditated a betrayal of their country to the dominion of their ancient stepmother. In times of alarm, party passions thrive on extremes of opinion. The hatred thus engendered is never satisfied with less than the reciprocal imputation of crime. If Mr. Jefferson and his counsellors were on the one side said to be sold to France, on the other, Colonel Pickering and his coadjutors of the Essex junto, were set down as in secret conspiracy with the British ministry.

In the midst of the turmoil John Adams and his son occupied a difficult position. Although by no means satisfied with the general coldness of Mr. Jefferson towards the commercial States, they were not so far carried away by their feelings as to overlook the superciliousness of Great Britain. They had known it by personal experience in its most offensive shapes, and they felt that submission to it in any form was not the most likely way to put an end to it for the future. Hence it happened that upon the occurrence of the outrage on The Chesapeake both of them hesitated not a moment in expressing their indignation, and their earnest wishes for measures of redress. Finding the federalists with whom he was connected unprepared to listen to his suggestions of immediate action, John Quincy Adams determined to signify his own opinion at all events. He therefore attended the public meeting called in Boston to that end. It was not called as a party meeting; but his presence among those generally ranked as opponents who naturally constituted the greater part, was no sooner perceived,

than by general acclamation he was summoned to take part in the deliberations. The resolutions were confined to the object for which the meeting was called; yet the act of Mr. Adams was construed among the federalists as ominous of the division which soon afterwards fell out.

It is not necessary to go into this history further than it may show the influence which it had over the action of the subject of this narrative. It is sufficient to this purpose to say that among other measures occasioned by the attack on The Chesapeake, was a proclamation issued by Mr. Jefferson, interdicting British armed vessels from entering the harbors of the United States. The British ministry on their part, conscious of the indignity which had been committed by the rashness of their officer, betrayed anxiety to atone for it rather as an exceptional act of incivility, than by disclaiming the right of search itself. In this spirit, whilst they determined upon sending a special minister to make negotiations and explanations confined to that single outrage, they accompanied the act by issuing the king's proclamation, recalling all British seamen from service under the flags of foreign nations, which was followed by other measures of hostility to the neutral trade of America by no means calculated to promote reconciliation. Colonel Pickering, however, viewing the policy of the administration as one designed to precipitate a war with Great Britain, drew up a paper expressive of his views upon the questions in dispute between the two governments, in the course of which he was carried so far as to palliate, if not directly to defend, the claim made in the king's proclamation. This paper roused the indignation of John Adams, and for the first time since his retirement, he broke silence by publishing an examination of the grounds of the pretension. This paper is inserted in the ninth volume of the present work. Thus, in conjunction with a more general reply to Pickering drawn up at the same time by his son, a new issue between the parties was formed, an issue which subsequent events widened into a perfect breach, presenting on the one side all of the federalists who had been dissatisfied with his administration driven to extremes in opposition, and on the other the whole weight of Mr. Adams's authority thrown on the side of Mr. Jefferson and the most vehement of his ancient enemies.

Had Great Britain been actuated during this period by a tithe of the conciliatory temper which has been manifested in her relations with the United States of late years, it cannot admit of a doubt that the difficulties which led to the war of 1812 might have been removed; but her ministers and people yet smarting under the recollection of the failure to uphold her sovereignty in America, instinctively shrunk from every concession to men whom they still regarded too much in the light of successful rebels. Still impressed with the exclusive commercial notions of the preceding century, they saw with a jealousy little disguised, the plenteous returns flowing into the coffers of their old subjects from a fortunate neutrality in the wars which were bearing them down; and they lost no opportunity so to apply the harshest principles of national law as to seize as much as they could of this abundance for their own benefit. Negotiations carried on whilst such a spirit prevailed, could end in nothing valuable. Napoleon had, early in his career, learned the lesson how uncertain a science is that diplomacy which rests its expectations only upon the supposed interests of peoples or governments. The passions form the great elements of calculation, at the same time that they defy all human sagacity.[1] This remark was never more true than during the long series of events, dating from the French revolution, in which he himself played the chief part. The evidences of it are thickly strewed along the course of these times, in the shape either of orders in council, paper blockades, and imperial decrees, or in the more bloody yet quite as profitless butcheries of the Nile, Trafalgar, and Copenhagen, of Austerlitz, Jena, Borodino, and Waterloo. A conciliatory spirit, guided by a benevolent regard for the welfare of millions of the race, would have saved all these horrors in a day; but the delirium of the sovereigns of these times proved the truth of the poet's verses on a scale in comparison with which the sufferings of the Greeks which he lamented were but as solitary accidents.

And in this wanton strife Great Britain was not slow to take her part. Instead of forbearance and moderation, her tone was domineering and her temper savage; and nowhere was this more sensibly felt than in the bearing of her naval officers on the

[1] *Mémoires du Roi Joseph*, tome 1, p. 68.

high seas, from the admiral of the red down to the cabin boy. Furthermore, among all the foreign nations with which they had to deal, none were so much exposed to this harsh treatment as Americans. The temper of the old king had engrafted itself upon the feelings of the aristocracy, and what is their temper will be sure to crop out in the official tone of the army and the navy. Under this trial the administration of Mr. Jefferson was doomed the more severely to suffer from the fact that the impression as to his leanings to France had become general in England. To reproach him at this day for resenting these manifestations of ill-will with too much violence, would be wide of the truth. The error, if any was committed, was of an opposite kind, in carrying forbearance to the point of timidity. If fault there was, it was in half-way contrivances which proved weak and inefficacious at a moment when helplessness injured Americans more than the power did which insulted them; but embargo and non-intercourse were, under the circumstances in which the people had chosen to put themselves, the only alternative. Mr. Adams, as well in his earliest labors in the revolutionary struggle, as in his later appeals to the pride of his countrymen during the difficulties with France, had ever urged the establishment of a naval force at least adequate to defend the seaboard and to protect the national commerce on the ocean; and, during his administration, the foundation of such a power had been so well laid, that, with a moderate and gradual development, it would by this time have been strong enough to do essential service. But this was one portion of his policy which had been the most severely denounced by his opponents. So that when Mr. Jefferson was elevated in his place, it was laid aside as having caused a wasteful expenditure of the public money. The statesmanship of self-protection was dwarfed into an economical array of Lilliputian gun-boats, and the commercial marine was left to shift for itself if pushed out to sea, or to rot at the wharves if kept at home. Confined to this alternative, it was certainly less mortifying to preserve the character of the country by a voluntary secession from the Ocean, than passively to suffer every thing calling itself American to become a prey to the raging passions of the European belligerents; and either was better than the suggestion, which was whispered in some quarters, if not openly favored, of submission to the British pretensions.

To the possibility of such a step as this last, J. Q. Adams, not less than his father, was most resolutely opposed. Their joint experience had produced no clearer lesson than this, that Great Britain seldom respected the rights of any nation on the sea, whose power did not make itself feared. The tone of George Canning had not been such as to inspire much confidence in any immediate change of her old habits. So they declared themselves on the side of the government in maintaining, at all events, the rights of America. From this moment they were no longer ranked among the remnants of the federal party. The consequences were soon important to them. The opposition to the federal government in Massachusetts, greatly fortified by the severe pressure upon the community of its anti-commercial measures, determined to anticipate the customary period of election of a new senator, in order the more significantly to mark the withdrawal of their confidence from the incumbent.

These particulars, which will find space for fuller development in the biography of the son, are here alluded to for the purpose only of tracing the progress of the irritations which ended in reviving the controversies of an earlier time. Some of the more violent federalists, not confining themselves to the topics before them, and provoked by the interposition of Mr. Adams in support of an administration which they abhorred, strove to impair whatever influence might remain to him, by a recurrence to the charges contained in Mr. Hamilton's pamphlet. Such is party warfare, from the ferocity of which no man who seeks strongly to affect public opinion, in times of agitation in a free country, can ever hope to be exempt. In the day of it, Mr. Adams had collected the materials for a replication to that attack, but partly from his own indifference to perfecting any literary labor, partly in consequence of the fate of his assailant, and perhaps from the fruitless nature of the contest, he suffered them to lie unused, until they had ceased to attract his attention. The stimulus of this assault now roused him to look them up. It so happened that the columns of a newspaper in Boston, then seeking to extend its circulation, were freely offered to him by the proprietors. This informal mode of publication was peculiarly tempting to him, as it released him from the necessity, always burdensome, of methodizing and

polishing his composition. At first he proposed to confine himself simply to a defence of the mission to France, which constituted the *gravamen* of Mr. Hamilton's attack; but once engaged in the review of his past life, he enlarged his plan, until it extended itself to the publication of a large part of his most valuable papers. These labors were continued from time to time for the space of three years. A portion, embracing perhaps two thirds of the communications, was collected, and published in numbers, which make together an octavo volume, entitled, "Correspondence of the late President Adams, originally published in the Boston Patriot, in a series of Letters." This book is now very rarely to be met with.

No more unfortunate time for the attainment of the object which the writer had in view could have been selected. He had borne with injustice and misrepresentation so long, without defending himself, that it would have been wise to let them take their course, at least for the remainder of his life, and to reserve himself, by a calm and careful preparation of his papers for a more impartial age, to establish the truth. There can be no question that the most unfavorable moment to gain proselytes, even to the most convincing arguments, is when the person attempting it, himself under great momentary irritation, is addressing persons who are listening under still more. Especially is this the case when the subject discussed has any bearing whatever upon immediate interests, on which the whole community has divided into parties. But Mr. Adams suffered himself to be so much censured, without reply, as to make him begin to doubt of any future reversal of the verdict, unless he should interfere at once and plead his own cause. To this opinion he was the more impelled by a fear that if he should prepare his papers for posthumous publication, some unlooked for accident or domestic vicissitude might, after all, intervene to disperse or to destroy them before they could ever reach the public. A singular mishap of this sort had occurred, under his immediate observation, in the case of Samuel Adams, and still another, of a different kind, in that of Dr. Franklin. He therefore determined, at all hazards, to proceed. The consequence was a perpetuation of his most important documents, it is true, but under circumstances most adverse to any beneficial effect, either to history or to his own reputation. Scattered

through the pages of a newspaper of very limited circulation, during three years, without order in the arrangement, and with most unfortunate typography, the papers might, indeed, be described as safe, but it was the safety of a treasure which an individual buries in the ground in his lifetime, and leaves to some straggler of a distant age, perchance to hit the spot where it may with labor be brought to light.

It is owing to the defects enumerated that no attempt has been made to reproduce this publication in its original form in the present work. That part of it which relates to the nomination of Mr. Murray, although marked by too much asperity towards Mr. Hamilton and his other opponents, is yet in itself so complete an exposition of his own view of that measure, that it has been transferred entire. From the remainder, such extracts have been taken as help in any way to elucidate the documents to which they refer, whilst those documents themselves have been arranged on a more methodical and comprehensive plan. In this way it is believed that nearly, if not quite all of material importance in that publication has been incorporated into this. The form itself is of little value. The task of authorship was always irksome to Mr. Adams. He seldom assumed it excepting upon the spur of some immediate impulse, and he never carried his labors further than the preparation of the manuscript. The consequence is that he suffered even more than writers commonly do from the careless typography of the newspapers in that day.

The accession of Mr. Madison to the Presidency, a result which Mr. Jefferson much favored, was the signal of a division among the friends of government, and of a more conciliatory policy towards the moderate federalists. The latter had been already manifested in the appointment of William Pinkney, of Maryland, to a special duty, and afterwards to the permanent mission in Great Britain. The policy might have been carried even to the restoration of good feelings at home and of more friendly relations with England, but for the interference of a portion of the Senate in dictating to the new President the person he should make Secretary of State. It did, however, extend to the appointment of John Quincy Adams to be the first accredited minister of the country at the court of St. Petersburg. His father naturally viewed this act as a relaxa-

tion, the first he had experienced since the accession of Mr. Jefferson, of the harshness manifested towards himself by the party in power. The same event embittered the hostility of his federal opponents, who had now, for the first time, gained an exclusive ascendency in Massachusetts. This state of things opened the way to a restoration of friendly feelings with Mr. Jefferson, who was now out of power, like himself, with nothing left to overcome the natural dictates of his heart. The interposition through which it was reached, was that of a common friend, Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia, whose voluntary services smoothed away all the obstacles formed by the long estrangement. Some explanation of their nature will not be out of place.

The character of Thomas Jefferson presents one of the most difficult studies to be met with by the historian of these times. At once an object of the most exalted eulogy among those who made him their political chief, and of the bitterest execrations of his opponents, it is not very easy, between the two, to trace the lines which truth and justice alike demand. As an original thinker, there can be little doubt of his claim to stand in the first rank among American statesmen. His, too, was the faculty, given to few, of leading the many, by impressing their minds with happily concentrated propositions. More ardent in his imagination than his affections, he did not always speak exactly as he felt towards either friends or enemies. As a consequence, he has left hanging over a part of his public life a vapor of duplicity, or, to say the least, of indirection, the presence of which is generally felt more than it is seen. Sometimes, indeed, when his passions become roused by personal rivalry, it shows itself darkly enough. Cautious, but not discreet, sagacious, though not always wise, impulsive, but not open, his letters, as printed since his death, have scarcely maintained for him the character he enjoyed among his followers whilst living. The most obvious deficiency is the absence of repose in mind, and of consistency in heart. The great lead he early took in the Revolution naturally brought him in frequent relations with Mr. Adams, generally friendly, though, considering the striking discordance of their characteristic traits, they could never have been intimate, but sometimes hostile. The first instance took place during the perilous days of 1775, when both were enlisted

with ardor in the work of pushing the country forward to Independence. Here was a common opponent and a common interest. The fields of labor only were diverse. Mr. Adams, the eldest in public life as well as in years, careless of external fame as a writer, preferred the natural channel to his impetuosity supplied by the unrestrained freedom of debate within the walls of congress, whilst Mr. Jefferson, avoiding that arena of conflicting opinions, chose rather the course which gave full play to the happy facility of his written word. Never was there a more fortunate combination to advance a great object. Mr. Adams hewed out the road, vigorously but roughly, may be, for the pioneers, whilst Mr. Jefferson smoothed and widened it for the nation to follow; and each felt the value of the other in the common task. Here they separated, Mr. Jefferson to do other duty in his native State, Mr. Adams presently to cross the water. The next time they met was many years later, in Europe, when Mr. Adams had become the representative of his disenthralled countrymen at the court of their former sovereign, and Mr. Jefferson filled the same position in the presence of the monarch of France. The duty imposed upon the two by congress to open negotiations of commercial treaties with all the powers of Europe once more entailed an intimacy and frequent correspondence, which there was nothing to prevent from growing into friendship. Mr. Jefferson, in a letter to Mr. Madison, recorded the impression he had of Mr. Adams at this time, which gives him much less credit for penetration than he deserved, whilst it does full justice to his nobler qualities.[1] Mr. Adams, on his side, measured Mr. Jefferson with even more friendly eyes, and, if he was aware of any qualifications, gave no utterance to them. An interchange of visits and frequent civilities, so long as they remained in Europe, continued to preserve their social relations upon the kindest footing.

During this period no incidents occurred to draw out the lurking contrasts of their characters. But scarcely was the constitution adopted, and the two were called to fill stations only one grade beneath the first, when events took place which had the effect of setting them in opposition to each other. They not only clashed in opinions, but became the types of opposing

[1] Washington's edition of *Jefferson's Writings*, vol. ii. p. 107.

ones before the world. The great cause of this change was the breaking out of the French Revolution. Mr. Jefferson hailed it as the harbinger of a new day on earth, whilst Mr. Adams saw in it only the image of a ship in a tempest without helm or anchor. But this difference of sentiment would not of itself have sufficed to disturb the private feelings of the parties, had it not been for an instance of the duplicity already referred to, which gave a shock to Mr. Adams's confidence such as he did not for a long time get over. The facts were these. During the spring of the year 1791, the United States Gazette of Philadelphia had been publishing, in numbers, a summary of Davila's work on the Civil Wars of France, with commentaries, which were well understood, though not expressly acknowledged, to be from the pen of Mr. Adams. Not unaware of their imputed origin, and much disturbed at what he thought their pernicious tendency, Mr. Jefferson welcomed, with great satisfaction, the arrival, from the other side of the Atlantic, of Thomas Paine's pamphlet on the Rights of Man, and approved the project of republishing it in America as an antidote to their poison. Wishing to express his thanks for the use of an English copy, which had been lent to him to read, he was impelled to add, in his note, the reasons why he rejoiced that the work was about to be reprinted. Prominent among these was an allusion to the heresies upon Davila. That Mr. Jefferson had not the remotest idea his note would ever be seen by the public, cannot admit of a doubt. Great, then, was his consternation, when he found it paraded at large, with his name attached, as a prefix to recommend the pamphlet publication.

This incident attracted much attention in Philadelphia, where it was regarded as an indecorous attack intentionally made by one high officer of the government against another. Pressed by this exposure, which imputed to him far more than he probably meant, he endeavored to escape from it by volunteering an explanation directly to Mr. Adams. This brought from the latter, then at home in Quincy, a frank reply, which, in its turn, elicited a rejoinder, explicitly disavowing any intention, by the terms of the unlucky note, to allude to Mr. Adams or any of his writings. With this explanation, Mr. Adams professed himself satisfied. Unfortunately, however, for Mr. Jefferson, a private letter of his, addressed to General Washington at the

very time, has been published, in which he expressly says that he *did* mean, in his note, to allude to the Discourses on Davila. From this contradiction there seems no outlet of escape. It is not a pleasant task to allude to it, neither would it be necessary, were it not essential to show that if Mr. Adams did not easily relinquish the suspicions, which Mr. Jefferson describes him as too liable at all times to entertain, the facts prove that he was not without abundant justification.[1]

Indeed, it can scarcely be denied that the publication of Mr. Jefferson's letters since his death, has fixed rather than relieved this shade upon his character. It is, however, much confined within the period between 1790 and 1801. Whilst, on the one side, he is professing a profound respect and attachment to General Washington, on the other, he is communicating privately to Philip Mazzei in Europe the most significant insinuations of the political apostasy of that chief. So his broader private charges made against Mr. Adams, implying danger to the republican institutions of the country from his devotion to the British theory of government, are not easily reconciled with his self-gratulation when assuming the Vice-President's chair, that the reins of government had not fallen into his hands, but rested rather with Mr. Adams. If he conscientiously believed one half of what he has left on record, respecting the doctrines of the latter, then he should have regarded his own failure of an election and Mr. Adams's success as serious public calamities. Neither was the earnest anxiety shown to suppress all publication of his private correspondence, much relieved by the accidental exposure, from time to time, of the pecuniary assistance he had rendered to the most profligate and unworthy calumniators of his opponents. It is no part of the design of this work unnecessarily to dwell on these unpleasant topics. But they are material to explain the motives of Mr. Adams's course, and the causes of his withdrawal of confidence from Mr. Jefferson at the close of his administration. He then fully believed him to be a false and dangerous man; and, so believing, he acted up to his conviction. The refusal to give any assurances as to his future course, was what determined Mr. Adams to take the extraordinary step of filling all the vacant

[1] See the Letters, as printed in this work, vol. viii. pp. 504–511.

places under the revised judicial system before his accession. On the other hand, this proceeding very naturally offended Mr. Jefferson. Indeed, it was a stretch of authority of that sort which can be too easily twisted to the justification of the very abuses it is designed to prevent, ever to be a safe measure in popular governments. And the result of this example is not without use as an illustration.

But no sooner is the conflict over, and Mr. Jefferson fully established in power, without risk of further rivalry with his opponent, than the shades of his character begin to disappear, and his better nature again struggles for the mastery. He has left on record the fact that he desired to confer on Mr. Adams the most lucrative post in New England, a step the inconsistency of which with the professions on which they came into power, his friends in that quarter seem to have felt much more keenly than he. He further states that he was deterred from prosecuting his wish by the suggestion that the advance would not be well received. Perhaps in this he was right; but the public manifestation of any such confidence would have done no disservice to his own character for magnanimity, however coldly it might have been met, whilst it would have greatly served to shield Mr. Adams from the ferocious and unsparing denunciations which his partisans, during his administration, were in the habit of pouring out upon him. And all of them were carried on, so far as the public could see, without the smallest effort on his part at counteraction. So little was Mr. Adams in the way of suspecting the existence of any good-will, that a trifling incident which occurred in Massachusetts was well calculated to impress him with a notion of the prevalence of quite an opposite spirit. The number of commissioners of bankruptcy was diminished by the repeal of the judiciary law in such a manner as to render it necessary to deprive some of the incumbents of their places. John Quincy Adams had received his appointment from the district judge under the law. He was now selected for removal under the authority vested in the president, although others, not a whit more in political sympathy, were retained. In the absence of all explanations, and none were offered, but one construction could be put upon such a proceeding. Yet Mr. Jefferson was not probably intending any such petty hostility as this implied. The prejudices which he had succeeded in

rousing among his followers, especially in New England, probably exceeded his power to control. But the act had its natural effect on Mr. Adams. Hence, when Mr. Jefferson endeavored to revive his ancient relations with him through an opening casually furnished by Mrs. Adams, his effort met with a colder reception than it deserved. The estrangement continued complete until after Mr. Jefferson's retirement had released him from his obligations to his partisans. On the other hand, the same event rescued the motives of Mr. Adams from all liability of misapprehension. It then needed only the intervention of some common friend like Dr. Rush, to bring the two once more into kindly relations. The bitterness of party warfare, which had prompted them to be mutually unjust, gradually softened away, and during the remainder of their lives, though they never again met face to face, they kept up a correspondence by letters upon indifferent topics of literature, theology, and general politics, which will probably retain a permanent interest with posterity.

Thus passed the life of Mr. Adams in peaceful retirement, for many years. His correspondence began to grow upon him, and he divided his time between reading on a more extensive scale than ever, and writing to his numerous friends. He devoted himself to a very elaborate examination of the religion of all ages and nations, the results of which he committed to paper in a desultory manner. The issue of it was the formation of his theological opinions very much in the mould adopted by the Unitarians of New England. Rejecting, with the independent spirit which in early life had driven him from the ministry, the prominent doctrines of Calvinism, the trinity, the atonement, and election, he was content to settle down upon the Sermon on the Mount as a perfect code presented to man by a more than mortal teacher. Further he declined to analyze the mysterious nature of his mission. In this faith he lived with uninterrupted serenity, and in it he died with perfect resignation.

The termination of the war with Great Britain by the signature of the treaty of Ghent, closed the disputes connected with European politics, which had raged with greater or less fury for nearly a quarter of a century. Mr. Adams, as a leading actor, had shared largely in the bitterness of the strife. He had been made the object of the most fierce and unrelenting attacks

from opposite quarters, and had in his turn been impelled to say and to write much of his opponents which a calm review would scarcely venture to defend. All this contention ceased with the return of peace. The fragment of the ultra-federal party, which had been revived into importance in New England and New York by the unpopularity of the war, and which with singular rashness had staked every thing upon the most intemperate opposition to the course of Mr. Madison, perished under the reaction that followed. Mr. Monroe was elevated to the Presidency without a struggle; and he immediately organized an administration which went into office upheld by the full confidence of the country. Of this administration, John Quincy Adams was the member to whom the department of foreign affairs was assigned; and the selection was ratified by a general expression of good-will in New England. This revolution was felt by his father in a greatly increased manifestation of the popular regard towards himself. From this time to the end of his life the traces of an ever-growing reaction are visible in the extension of his correspondence, which, in spite of his seclusion from public affairs, became almost as large as it had been when he had numerous offices to bestow. Not a shadow now remained on this score to disturb the natural serenity of his mind. It is highly honorable to Mr. Jefferson, that his active and unsolicited testimony, generously given to the value of the public services of his ancient opponent, and extensively spread among the large class over whose minds his authority was yet unbounded, had a great effect in accelerating this change. It was a cheering consolation to the declining days of the old statesman, whose integrity not even his most bitter enemies had ever really disputed, the prospect of losing which had at an earlier moment filled his mind with anxiety and gloom.

So entirely had party strife disappeared upon the second election of Mr. Monroe, that no division took place in the popular votes in the several States. In Massachusetts, Mr. Adams was placed on the list of electors and was chosen without opposition. He was made President of the College, and gave his vote for James Monroe as President and Daniel D. Tompkins, as Vice-President. With a single exception in New Hampshire, prompted by personal regard for John Quincy Adams, the

electors were unanimous; the first instance since Washington went out of office, and not improbably the last that may occur in the American annals.

Shortly after the joyful event of the return of his son from his eight years' absence in the diplomatic service of the country, Mr. Adams was destined to meet with the severest affliction that had ever yet befallen him. His wife, who had gone through the vicissitudes of more than half a century in his company; who had sympathized with him in all his highest aspirations, and had cheered him in his greatest trials; who had faithfully preserved his worldly interests, when he was unable to be present to guard them himself; who had enlivened his home and had shared his joys and his pains alike, was taken ill with a typhus fever, in the autumn of 1818, and died on the 28th of October. He was at this time eighty-three years of age, and of course had little reason to expect long to survive her; but to him her loss was a perpetually recurring evil; for she had been the stay of his household. Her character had adapted itself to his in such a manner as to improve the good qualities of both, so that her loss threw over his manner ever afterwards, a tinge of sadness not natural to him; and the sprightly humor, which made so agreeable a part of the letters addressed to her in her lifetime, as it did of his daily conversation, ceased in a degree to appear.

He now began to indulge in the latest privilege of old age. He recurred to the various events of his life, and sought to compare his remembrance of them with that of the few contemporaries who yet survived. Many facts of importance seemed to him in danger of being forgotten, and the services of some individuals entirely overlooked. What especially stirred him was the publication of Mr. Wirt's Life of Patrick Henry, because it seemed to claim the merit of originating resistance to the pretensions of Great Britain too exclusively for the State of Virginia. This brought him forward in the explanation of the action of James Otis, concerning whom he supplied a great part of all the information that has been preserved. The series of letters, relating to this subject, written at a very advanced age to Judge Tudor, abound in details and anecdotes which would not otherwise have come down to us. Many of the facts have been substantially confirmed by the testimony of Governor

Hutchinson, the last volume of whose history was not brought to light until after Mr. Adams's death. The most remarkable feature of these late letters is the vigor of imagination and freshness of feeling with which they are written; they overflow with the desire to do honor to those over whose memory time was rapidly closing, and yet whose services had not been without their claim upon the public gratitude. In this way he did much to perpetuate the recollections of honorable events in the career of Otis, of Hawley, and of Samuel Adams, and the labor was to him a most grateful tribute to their worth.

He was now eighty-five years old, and his physical frame, strong as it had been, was slowly but surely giving way under the sap of the destroyer. But his mind still worked with vigor, when an occasion happened which fully developed the regard in which he was held by the people of his native State. The time had come when the District of Maine, which had been long attached to Massachusetts, though not an integral part of her territory, demanded an independent government, and an admission into the Union on an equal footing with the parent State. Massachusetts assented, and a separation was effected; but this event carried with it a necessity of adapting the forms of the Constitution of the State to the circumstances of her greatly abridged limits. This could be done only by calling a convention to amend it. Arrangements were made accordingly. Mr. Adams was unanimously elected a delegate by the people of his native town, just as he had been forty years before, when the instrument now to be amended had been originally framed. Great pains were everywhere taken to select for this body such citizens as had become most distinguished for abilities, learning, or weight of character. The absence of party divisions just then favored such an object remarkably. The result was, the convocation of a popular assembly such as was never gathered from so limited a territory before, and such as may not soon be seen again. The three learned professions, the commercial, the agricultural, and the mechanic interests, all were represented by an amount of intelligence, of culture, of social and of moral worth, such as any Commonwealth of far greater dimensions might well be proud to show.

The sessions of this Convention were opened on the 15th of November, 1820, and were continued until the 9th of January,

1821. When Mr. Adams, in his eighty-sixth year, with a form yet erect, though tremulous with age, made his appearance on the second day, he was received by the members of this brilliant assembly, all standing, with demonstrations of the utmost respect and regard. The dignified office of presiding over its deliberations had been unanimously tendered to him through a Committee, instructed to present to him the following resolutions adopted on the motion of Isaac Parker, then the respected Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth: —

"Whereas, the Honorable John Adams, a member of this Convention, and elected the President thereof, has for more than half a century devoted the great powers of his mind, and his profound wisdom and learning, to the service of his country and mankind:

In fearlessly vindicating the rights of the North American provinces against the usurpation and encroachments of the superintendent government:

In diffusing a knowledge of the principles of civil liberty among his fellow-subjects, and exciting them to a firm and resolute defence of the privileges of freemen:

In early conceiving, asserting, and maintaining the justice and practicability of establishing the independence of the United States of America:

In giving the powerful aid of his political knowledge in the formation of the Constitution of his native State, which constitution became in a great measure the model of those which were subsequently formed:

In conciliating the favor of foreign powers, and obtaining their countenance and support in the arduous struggle for independence:

In negotiating the treaty of peace, which secured forever the sovereignty of the United States, and in defeating all attempts to prevent it; and especially in preserving in that treaty the vital interests of the New England States:

In demonstrating to the world, in his defence of the Constitutions of the several United States, the contested principle, since admitted as an axiom, that checks and balances in legislative power are essential to true liberty:

In devoting his time and talents to the service of the nation,

in the high and important trusts of Vice-President and President of the United States:

And lastly, in passing an honorable old age in dignified retirement, in the practice of all the domestic virtues, thus exhibiting to his countrymen and to posterity an example of true greatness of mind and of genuine patriotism: —

Therefore, Resolved, That the members of this Convention, representing the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do joyfully avail themselves of this opportunity to testify their respect and gratitude to this eminent patriot and statesman, for the great services rendered by him to his country, and their high gratification that, at this late period of life, he is permitted by Divine Providence to assist them with his counsel in revising the constitution which, forty years ago, his wisdom and prudence assisted to form.

Resolved, That a committee of twelve be appointed by the chair, to communicate this proceeding to the Honorable John Adams, to inform him of his election to preside in this body, and to introduce him to the chair of this Convention."

Grateful for this honorable testimonial to the value of his past services, Mr. Adams was sufficiently sensible of his failing strength to reject all idea of assuming the arduous labors of the post thus offered. He therefore returned to the Committee the following answer: —

"Fellow-Citizens, — An election at my age and in my circumstances by the free suffrages of so ample a representation of the fortunes and talents, the experience and wisdom, the authority, the virtues, and the piety of the ancient and renowned State of Massachusetts, I esteem the purest and fairest honor of my life; and my gratitude is proportionally ardent and sincere. I pray you, gentlemen, to present to the Convention my most cordial thanks.

Your enumeration of services performed for this country recalls to my recollection the long services and succession of great and excellent characters with whom I have had the honor to act in the former part of my life, and to whose exertions I have endeavored to add my feeble aid; characters, who have been employed by Divine Providence as instruments in preserving and securing

that unexampled liberty which this nation now possesses; that liberty, which is the source of all our happiness and prosperity; a prosperity which cannot be contemplated by any virtuous mind without gratitude, consolation, and delight. May it be perpetual!

Gentlemen, — As my age is generally known, it will readily be believed that my forces are too far exhausted to perform the arduous duties of the high office which the benevolence of the Convention has assigned to me. I am, therefore, under the necessity to request permission of the Convention to decline the appointment, and to pray that some other gentleman may be elected, whose vigorous age and superior talents may conduct their deliberations with more convenience to themselves, and with greater satisfaction to the people of the Commonwealth at large."

In the proceedings Mr. Adams took great interest, but his bodily frame, now easily susceptible of derangement from any change of the long settled habits of a uniform life at home, refused the test of daily attendance during the severity of the winter season. Only once or twice did he venture upon any remarks. A report of what he said is given in the published volume of the debates. It is characteristic, and in perfect consistency with the views which he had steadily held through life. These views were singularly misrepresented so long as temporary objects were to be served by weakening his influence over the popular mind, but there is now no motive left to consider them as other than they are. They may be in brief described as the system of a whig of the Revolution, born of purely English stock, but transplanted to America; republican in its character, and popular, without being democratic, in its tendencies; conservative in its forms, with but a slight leaning to aristocracy. On this last point, nothing is more remarkable than the extent to which his character was misconceived. In the simplicity of his daily habits he would have stood the test of comparison even with Mr. Jefferson, whom the great body of the people had learned to regard as the embodiment of all republican ideas.

There was one change in the old Constitution which Mr. Adams labored, though ineffectually, to procure. It was a mod-

ification of the third article of the Bill of Rights, an article which he did not himself draw when he furnished the rest, in such form as would do away with the recognition of distinct modes of religious faith by the State. This amendment had been suggested by Dr. Price in his comments upon the Constitution, published soon after it was made, though it is not likely that Mr. Adams remembered it. Not able to make his voice clearly heard by the members, he had recourse to the agency of others to effect his object; but it was in vain. The old Puritan feeling which began with laboring to establish a Christian Commonwealth, was yet alive, and refused to recognize Jews or heathens as perfect equals with Christians before the law. The proposition was gently put aside; the spirit of it has, however, since found its way, by the operation of an amendment, into the system of government.

This appearance in the convention made a fitting close to the public career of Mr. Adams. His few remaining years were passed serenely at his residence in Quincy, where he kept up the habit of receiving strangers, who came from abroad, or visitors from other States, attracted by curiosity to see him. Once a year, his time was enlivened by the presence of his son, John Quincy Adams, now Secretary of State, and himself arrived at a position in the popular estimation, which seemed to open a prospect of his elevation to the Presidency, as the successor of Mr. Monroe. It was this circumstance which gave rise to the last attempt to disturb the peace of Mr. Adams's declining years. Not long after his retirement in 1801, and whilst smarting under the irritation, caused by the sense of injustice done to him by members of both contending parties, the same which produced the papers in the "Boston Patriot," a maternal relative of his, then bordering upon insanity, which at last ended in suicide, drew from him, by force of earnest expressions of sympathy, and under the seal of the strictest confidence, the most unreserved expression of his sentiments respecting the chief actors and events in the latter portion of his public life. Not until long after the catastrophe that befell the recipient of these letters, and the rise of John Quincy Adams to be a prominent candidate for the Presidency, did an inducement occur to betray confidence by bringing them to light. The heir of Mr. Cunningham then earned by the transfer of them to

the political opponents of the son, a claim upon their gratitude in case of their attaining power, which was ultimately recognized by the gift of a subordinate place in the Boston custom-house. By this means the letters were published to the world. It may fairly be doubted whether the injury done by them to the prospects of John Quincy Adams was ever an equivalent even for the inconsiderable reward paid for the breach of trust.

At any rate, they appeared too late to disturb the equanimity of the father. Mr. Jefferson and Colonel Pickering, the two surviving individuals most harshly reflected upon in them, appear to have perused the papers with very opposite emotions. The former justly considered them as the relics of a conflict in which he had already given as well as taken blows enough not to seek to renew it in his last days. The latter felt it his duty to leave behind him a general replication to all the charges ever made against him, which might defend his memory from the revival of them after his death. At this day it would seem as if a less virulent production would have better answered to protect his fame. Bitter as it was, the perusal of it excited in Mr. Adams no disposition to protract the controversy. The day for such passions had gone by with him. The returning good-will of his countrymen was healing all his wounds. He regretted the publication of his own letters, not from any anxiety for himself, for his career was run, and by the substance of the opinions, already expressed in other forms, on public affairs he was ready to abide, but on account of the spirit which the betrayal of his most private feelings in a season of irritation might renew in others, after his own had subsided into peace. Even with Colonel Pickering, the last as he ever had been the most vindictive of his enemies, he had no further hostilities to wage.

With the public these pamphlets made little impression. The original motive for printing seemed so unworthy, that they excited little response and obtained but a limited currency. They have been rather more referred to in later times as authority for facts on one side or the other of public questions; but for obvious reasons they are entitled to but a moderate share of weight; and for the reason that they never were intended by the writer for the public eye, no part of the letters thus betrayed has been admitted to a place in the present work. Neither

have they been relied upon to sustain the narrative in this biography.

Tranquil as Mr. Adams had become in his last days, and happy in his correspondence with the remnant of his old compeers, he was not indifferent to the struggle which was going on for the office of President of the United States. His son was now a mark for the same shafts which had been aimed at him thirty years before, and it was not unnatural that he should await with emotion the favorable or adverse issue that might attend it. From youth to age his son had been a faithful one to him, never varying in his efforts to promote his comfort and his happiness, always supplying abundance of material to gratify his highest pride. To have such a son rewarded by the people of the United States by an elevation to the highest station in their gift, was an aspiration which he could hardly be sanguine enough to indulge, though the conviction that he was fully worthy of it had been long cherished in his mind. It was reserved to him to live to see the fulfilment of his hopes.

By reason of the multiplication of candidates consequent upon the disintegration of the parties, no election of President was made at the usual period for the popular choice. As a consequence, the decision fell, for the second time since the formation of the government, upon the House of Representatives. The only formidable competitor of Mr. Adams was General Jackson; and between them the friends of the minor candidates were compelled to choose. The choice of Mr. Adams was effected by the adherents of Mr. Clay, who controlled the votes of four States. But, at that moment, the supporters of the fourth candidate, Mr. Crawford, were understood to be likewise disposed to prefer him, had circumstances made a decision on their part necessary. As a consequence, John Quincy Adams was declared to be elected. The event brought to his father numbers of congratulatory letters, some specimens of which merit insertion here: —

Washington, 12 February, 1825.

Receive the most cordial congratulations from an old friend of the father and the son, who on this occasion feels much for you, and for him; and who will be happy on the Bunker Hill

anniversary to express in person the patriotic and individual sentiments which have been known to you for near half a century.

Most truly and affectionately,
Your old friend,
LAFAYETTE.

The next is from an individual who had been active and efficient in his opposition to the father in former days, and who, as a member of the House of Representatives from Louisiana, had not contributed to this election; but his feeling at the time may be understood from the terms of his congratulation: —

I cannot avoid seizing this occasion of congratulating you on an event which gives you the rare felicity of seeing your son succeed to that high station in which you yourself were once placed by the suffrage of the nation. Although circumstances did not permit me to contribute to this event, I am not the less convinced that his administration will prove honorable to himself and advantageous to his country.

I have the honor, &c.
EDWARD LIVINGSTON.

The next is from one of the sufferers under the old Sedition Law, who as editor of the "Bee," a newspaper in Connecticut, had been subjected to prosecution for his attacks on Mr. Adams's administration: —

New York, 4 March, 1825.

VENERABLE SIR,—As you may now have some respite from the respectful attentions of your immediate friends on the auspicious result of the recent Presidential election, I take the liberty of asking permission, also, to congratulate you upon an event so honorable to yourself, so creditable and beneficial to our country, and so fortunate for the distinguished subject of the popular choice.

We perceive, Sir, in the election of your son, a signal proof that republics are not forever insensible to personal merits, nor always ungrateful to faithful servants; and that the long wished time has at length arrived, when good sense has triumphed over party spirit, and patriotism prevailed over political hostility.

It is to your glory, Sir, that your son has proved himself worthy of your instructions, your wisdom, and your experience, and become confessedly the fittest and most deserving object to succeed, after time has restored the empire of reason, his father in the highest confidence and trust of a great and free people.

I remain, Sir, (changed with the times, *tempora mutantur*, since 1798, and notwithstanding my trial of the Sedition Law,) with the most sincere deference, esteem, and veneration, and desirous of contributing my mite to the consolations of a political Simeon, Your very obed't humble servant,

CHARLES HOLT.

But the question will naturally arise, how did the individual most deeply interested in this result announce it to his father. The answer may be briefly given. Immediately after the decision in the House of Representatives, Rufus King, then one of the Senators of the State of New York, despatched from the capitol the following note to the son, apprising him of what had taken place: —

Senate Chamber, 9 February, 1825.

MY DEAR SIR, — We have this moment heard the issue of the election, and I send you and your venerable father my affectionate congratulations upon your choice as President of the United States on the first ballot of the House of Representatives. I include your father, as I consider your election as the best amends for the injustice of which he was made the victim.

To me and mine, the choice has been such as we have cordially hoped for and expected. RUFUS KING.

This interesting note from one who had been himself a prominent actor in the times to which he alludes, the recipient immediately inclosed in another of his own, which he sent to his father. It ran thus: —

Washington, 9 February, 1825.

MY DEAR AND HONORED FATHER, — The inclosed note from Mr. King will inform you of the event of this day, upon which I can only offer *you* my congratulations, and ask your blessings and prayers. Your affectionate and dutiful son,

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.[1]

[1] The answer to this note is printed in the tenth volume, p. 416.

Mr. Adams survived this event little more than a year. He was now at the age of ninety, infirm in body, but yet preserving a remarkable activity of mind. Unable to see clearly enough to read, or to guide a pen to write, he still retained so much interest in present objects as fully to employ the services of members of his immediate family, both in reading to him and in writing after his dictation. What he most disliked was the mere vegetation of extreme age; rather than to fall into which he would cheerfully listen to any book, however trifling, which might at the moment be attracting the fancy of younger generations. The brilliant fictions of Walter Scott, then in the height of their popularity, the sea stories of Cooper, and even the exaggerated, but vigorous poetry of Byron, were all welcome, in the intervals when he could not obtain what he better relished, the reminiscences of contemporaries, or the speculations of more profound writers in England and France. His avidity for new literature was so well understood that he seldom failed of a supply from the good-will of kind friends in the neighboring city. In this way he used to sit day after day, with his arms folded, one hand resting on a cane, exactly as he is represented by the painter, Gilbert Stuart, in the portrait, an engraving from which is to be found facing the title of the tenth volume of the present work. This condition was varied by a single ride daily taken in fine weather, around the vicinity, in the scenery of which he ever delighted, and by conversation with friends and visitors who chanced to call and see him. Such was his habit after exercise in walking had become too fatiguing to his yet heavy frame. Thus ebbed away the remnant of his being, gently and insensibly, as Cicero so happily describes: "Semper enim in his studiis laboribusque viventi non intelligitur quando obrepat senectus. Ita sensim sine sensu ætas senescit. Nec subito frangitur, sed diuturnitate extinguitur."[1]

[1] It is only during the five years prior to the last that the writer, whose knowledge of the French language brought him into frequent requisition in the manner above described, can speak from strong personal recollection of the subject of his biography. Often did he sit for days together, reading aloud, watching the noble image of a serene old age, or listening with unabated interest to the numerous anecdotes, the reminiscences of the past, and the speculations upon the questions of all times, in which he loved to indulge. Even then the idea occurred of making notes of these conversations for his own improvement. They might have been of great service in preparing the present work. But the author, at that time very young, little imagined that such a task would ever devolve upon him.

The relatives of Mr. Adams were not, however, unaware that the spring of 1826 opened upon him with enfeebled powers. This became so observable in the month of April as to warn them of what would ere long take place. He was stretching over his ninety-first year. The year was generally viewed with uncommon interest as marking the lapse of the first half century of the national history. The Fourth of July approached, and on every side sprung up a demand for a more than common celebration of that anniversary. The eyes of all involuntarily turned towards the few who yet lingered of the survivors of 1776, and especially to the two individuals most identified with the action which had made the day famous forever. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson yet lived. They were thought to be still able to come forward and crown with their presence the joyous festivities of the jubilee. With what interest would the younger generations view these time-honored servants of freedom, once more brought together in presence of the nation, after twenty-five years of separation, to shake hands for the last time with each other, to take note of the happiness and prosperity they had done so much to promote, and to receive the warmest expressions of gratitude from millions of grateful hearts. Stimulated by these ideas, invitations poured in from all quarters, to secure the desired meeting at some favorite and convenient place. Even the neighbors of Mr. Adams, though they well understood his strength to be unequal to a distant excursion, yet flattered themselves that he would be able at least to honor their comparatively small gathering with his presence. The sanguine hopes thus excited were all destined to be equally disappointed; for the objects of them were even then not wholly insensible to the nature of the far more imperative summons that was awaiting them. As the time drew nearer, the townsmen of Mr. Adams became more and more aware of the progress of his decline. But if they could not have him in person, they still desired to obtain from him some last word or sign of cheer to his friends and neighbors upon the interesting occasion. To this end the individual who had been selected to make the oration, was deputed to pay him a visit, and communicate their wishes. He did so; and he has briefly recorded the result in a diary, which he left behind him. It was on Friday, the 30th of June, at nine o'clock in the morning, that, according to his

account, he walked down to see Mr. Adams. His record is as follows: "Spent a few minutes with him in conversation, and took from him a toast, to be presented on the Fourth of July as coming from him. I should have liked a longer one; but as it is, this will be acceptable. 'I will give you,' said he,

'INDEPENDENCE FOREVER!'"

He was asked if he would not add any thing to it, and he replied, "not a word."

The visitor, evidently not one of the laconic school, in objecting to this toast as not long enough, may raise a smile in the present day. Looking back from this distance of time, it would seem as if the addition of another word must have spoiled it. In that brief sentiment Mr. Adams infused the essence of his whole character, and of his life-long labors for his country.

The visitor had not come too early, for the symptoms of debility became more and more alarming every moment. There was no suffering, except from the labor of respiration, but this increased so steadily, that early on the morning of the 4th Mr. Adams's medical adviser, Dr. Holbrook, predicted his patient would not last beyond sunset. In the mean time the celebrations went on in Quincy, as everywhere else. No more interesting festival has ever occurred. From one end of the country to the other, the names of Adams and Jefferson were coupled, wherever Americans were gathered together, in accents of gratitude and praise. All remnants of party passions were completely drowned in the strong flood of national feeling which overspread the land. At Quincy, the exercises passed and the banquet began. The orator of the day here again records the following: "I presented the toast I obtained from the President, and it was received with unceasing shouts."

As these shouts were rising to the skies, shouts which might have been caught by his ears, had they been longer sensitive to receive them, the spirit of Mr. Adams was passing away. The sands of a long, a varied, and a memorable life were run out. A noble and a pure heart, the aspirations of which had ever been for the advancement of his country and the welfare of his race, had ceased to beat. The record already quoted adds that "the intelligence of the President's death was received

as the company were beginning to leave the hall."[1] It was not a moment auspicious to further manifestations of noisy joy, although such a death could not convey with it any of the common feelings of sadness. It was a fitting close of a brilliant day. The setting sun spread its rays over even the dispersing vapors only to give a more serene majesty to the golden splendors of the sky. Could it be given to a man to choose the hour and moment of his exit most glorious to his name and most in harmony with his life, none within the wide range of mortal experience can be imagined more to be desired than this.

Yet, strange as it may seem, another incident was coming in to give a second and still more remarkable association with the occasion. It is stated of Mr. Adams that the last words he ever uttered, so far as they could be gathered from his failing articulation, were these: "Thomas Jefferson still survives." Long as the two had been travelling in parallel lines to the common goal, ever observant of their relative position, such an idea might naturally occur to Mr. Adams, especially at a moment which brought them so freshly together in the minds of all other men. But he was mistaken. The fact was not as he supposed. Thomas Jefferson did not survive. He, too, had reached this anniversary, and he, too, had been summoned, but at an earlier hour, to immortality. Marvellous as it might seem, perhaps exceeding, in respect of its strange coincidences, many a wonder transmitted from a mythological age, yet the event was to be indelibly stamped on the memory of America, that John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, who had inaugurated the independence of the nation on the 4th of July, 1776, exactly fifty years afterwards, years not unmarked with other coincidences quite extraordinary, if this closing one had not thrown them all into the shade, were almost simultaneously translated, in the midst of the acclamations of millions of their race, to the judgment of their God. No greater sublunary blessing could have remained in store for them. For if the opinion ascribed to Solon be just, when asked by Crœsus,

[1] These extracts from the diary of George Whitney, afterwards pastor of the Unitarian parish at Jamaica Plain, in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and too early cut off in his sphere of usefulness, were furnished to me by the kindness of a surviving brother, the Reverend F. A. Whitney, of Brighton. The facts may be depended upon, which is not always the case with the last hours of distinguished men.

the rich Lydian monarch, whether he had ever seen a man more blessed than he, that he named two brothers, Cleobis and Bion, who once put themselves to the wagon and drew their mother to Juno's temple; and then, after sacrificing and feasting, went to rest and died together in the height of their reputation of filial piety; how much more deserving to be called blessed is the life of these two, who drew their nursing-mother, against strong resistance, to the temple of liberty, and who, after a long period of services and labors devoted to her welfare, went to the same rest under auspices a thousand-fold more sublime. The moral of the story of Cleobis and Bion has, in the incidents which attended both the lives and the deaths of the two great men of America, an application by so much the wider as it expands the beautiful idea of completed duty from the narrow circle of a single household to the ever unfolding area of a nation's home.

As the news of this singular coincidence spread over the land, it raised everywhere a thrill of emotion such as has never been caused by any other public event. It was not the wail of grief, such as is drawn forth by the sense of privation by the loss of valuable lives. The advanced age of these persons, if nothing else, neutralized that. It was the offspring of a mixture of feelings, the chief of which were surprise at the strangeness of the occurrence, veneration for the men themselves, and delight in the splendor which it would forever reflect upon a page of the national annals. Certainly, the fabulous passing away of the first Roman king, nearly on the same anniversary, in the midst of elementary chaos, does not compare with it in grandeur. Men loved to meet each other and to dwell on the most minute particulars, as they were sedulously laid before the public by the newspapers, and to read the comments raised to unusual eloquence by the tone of the general mind. The first feelings were followed by enthusiastic demonstrations of respect to the memory of the dead. The most distinguished orators and statesmen were summoned to prepare eulogies or memoirs, which were delivered at times set aside for the performance of appropriate services. In this way a large number of orations and addresses were produced, which are not without their value as a permanent contribution to the literature and history of the United States. Among them it is not inappropriate to make particular mention of that delivered by

Daniel Webster, on account of the felicity with which he succeeded in weaving into the form of a speech in favor of Independence energetic passages scattered in Mr. Adams's writings, and in animating the whole with somewhat of the ardor of the individual he sought to personate. So successful has this attempt been regarded by some, that to this day the belief is entertained that the speech is indeed that which Mr. Adams actually made. Other addresses are valuable for authentic particulars and curious anecdotes carefully collected at the time, which have thus been rescued from the oblivion which commonly overwhelms the personal reminiscences of contemporaries. As time goes on, it is by no means unlikely that these various productions will be regarded with ever growing interest, not simply for the facts, more or less correctly given, in which they abound, but also as marking an epoch in American history — the close of its heroic age.

Mr. Adams died, leaving many descendants, some of the fourth generation, among whom he distributed, by his will, the limited estate which he had inherited or acquired. The bulk of this consisted in farming lands round about him, the income of which barely sufficed to maintain him in his later days, even in the simple and frugal manner in which he lived. Indeed, so rapid was the decline in the returns of this sort of property, after the peace of 1814, that he was induced to propose a transfer of his largest and most burdensome estate of Mount Wollaston to his eldest son, in exchange for a fixed annuity for the rest of his life, a proposal which was at once acceded to, and faithfully executed. A portion of his lands, together with his library, he decided, in 1822, to convey to the inhabitants of Quincy, as a token of his good-will towards them. His main object in giving, among other things, the very spot memorable as the birthplace of John Hancock, and the residence, at one time, of Josiah Quincy, Jr., was to make upon it a foundation for a school of the highest class, and a library, forever to remain open for the encouragement of the highest and best aspirations of future generations of the youth in his native place. His purpose remains yet partially unexecuted, the property conveyed not having thus far yielded returns adequate to the fulfilment of the provisions of the grant. But there is no reason to doubt that the time is approaching when they

will be sufficient; and when a public edifice will stand upon the spot he designated, which, whilst it shall associate itself with the memory of two other cherished names, will by its fruits remain, a beneficent monument of its founder, long after barren marble and brass shall have fallen into dust.

In Mr. Adams's vocabulary, the word *property* meant land. He had no confidence in the permanence of any thing else, hence he left little else behind him.[1] The opinion was inherited by his son, John Quincy Adams, who, in consequence, purchased, at the settlement of the estate agreeably to the will, the lands his father left. Fortunately for both, their simple habits created no need of straining the sources of an annual income to minister to the demands of luxury or to the vanities of an extraordinary state. They lived free from pecuniary obligations of every kind to others, a fate which has not always attached to the incumbents of the highest executive posts in America; and they died leaving the same estate greatly increased in nominal value, but little more productive than when they acquired it.

In figure John Adams was not tall, scarcely exceeding middle height, but of a stout, well-knit frame, denoting vigor and long life, yet as he grew old, inclining more and more to corpulence. His head was large and round, with a wide forehead and expanded brows. His eye was mild and benignant, perhaps even humorous, when he was free from emotion, but when excited, it fully expressed the vehemence of the spirit that stirred within. His presence was grave and imposing, on serious occasions, but not unbending. He delighted in social conversation, in which he was sometimes tempted to what he called rhodomontade. But he seldom fatigued those who heard him; for he mixed so much of natural vigor, of fancy, and of illustration with the stores of his acquired knowledge, as to keep alive their interest for a long time. His affections were warm, though not habitually demonstrated, towards his relatives. His anger, when thoroughly roused, was, for a time, extremely violent, but when it subsided, it left no trace of malevolence behind. Nobody could see him intimately without admiring the simplicity and

[1] The estate of Mr. Adams, including what he conveyed in his lifetime to his children, and to the town, could scarcely have fallen short of a hundred thousand dollars in value at the time of his decease.

truth which shone in his action, and standing in some awe at the power and energy of his will. It was in these moments that he impressed those around him with a sense of his greatness. Even the men employed on his farm were in the habit of citing instances, some of which have been remembered down to the present day. At times his vehemence would become so great as to make him overbearing and unjust. This was most apt to happen in cases of pretension or any kind of wrongdoing. Mr. Adams was very impatient of cant, or of opposition to any of his deeply established convictions. Neither was his indignation at all graduated to the character of the individuals who might happen to excite it. It had little respect of persons, and would hold an illiterate man, or a raw boy to as heavy a responsibility for uttering a crude heresy as the strongest thinker or the most profound scholar. His nature was too susceptible to overtures of sympathy and kindness, for it tempted him to trust more than was prudent in the professions of some who proved unworthy of his confidence. Ambitious in one sense he certainly was; but it was not the mere aspiration for place or power. It was the desire to excel in the minds of men, by the development of high qualities, the love, in short, of an honorable fame, that stirred him to exult in the rewards of popular favor. Yet this passion never tempted him to change a course of action or to suppress a serious conviction; to bend to a prevailing error or to disavow an odious truth.

In two things he was favored above most men who have lived. He was happily married to a woman whose character was singularly fitted to develop every good point of his; a person with a mind capable of comprehending his, with affections strong enough to respond to his sensibility, with a sympathy equal to his highest aspirations, and yet with flexibility sufficient to yield to his stronger will without impairing her own dignity. In this blessed relation he was permitted to continue for fifty-four years, embracing far more than the whole period of his active life; and it is not too much to say that to it he was indebted not merely for the domestic happiness which ran so like a thread of silver through the most troubled currents of his days, but for the steady and unwavering support of all the highest purposes of his career. Upon the several occasions when his action placed him in the most critical and difficult positions, when the popular voice

seemed loud in condemning the wisdom or the patriotism of his course, her confidence in his correctness seems never to have wavered for a moment. Not a trace of hesitation or doubt is to be seen in her most confidential communications; on the contrary, her voice in those cases came in to reinforce his determination, and to urge him to persevere. Often she is found to have drawn her conclusions in advance, for several of her letters bear on the outside the testimony of her husband's admiration of her sagacity. The soothing effect this must have had upon him, when chafed, as his temper not unfrequently was, by the severe friction to which it was exposed in the great struggles of his life, may easily be conceived. An ignoble spirit would have thrown him into depression; a repining and dissatisfied one would have driven him frantic. Hers was lofty and yet cheerful, decided and yet gentle. Whilst she understood the foibles of his character and yielded to them enough to maintain her proper authority, she never swerved from her admiration of his abilities, her reliance upon the profoundness of his judgment, and her pride in the integrity of his life. And if this was her state of feeling, it was met on his part by a devotion which never wavered, and a confidence scarcely limited by a doubt of the possibility of error. A domestic relation like this compensated for all that was painful and afflictive in the vicissitudes of their career; and its continuance to so late a stage in their joint lives left to the survivor little further to wish for in this world beyond the hope of a reunion in the next.

The other extraordinary blessing was the possession of a son who fulfilled in his career all the most sanguine expectations of a father. From his earliest youth John Quincy Adams had given symptoms of uncommon promise, and contrary to what so frequently happens in such cases, every year as it passed over his head only tended the more to confirm the hopes that had been raised at the beginning. A kindly nature received from early opportunities of travel and instruction in foreign lands, not the noxious seeds which so often germinate only to spread corruption, but a generous and noble development as well of the intellect as of the affections. At twenty years of age his father saw in him the outline of a full-grown statesman, a judgment which time served only the more unequivocally to confirm. But it was not merely in the circumstances of his

brilliant progress as a public man that his parent had reason to delight. As a son, affectionate, devoted, and pure, his parents never failed to find in him sources of the most unmingled satisfaction. In whatever situation he was placed, and however far removed from them in the performance of his duties, he never forgot the obligations which he owed, to soothe by every effort in his power the hours of their declining years. The voluminous correspondence that was the offspring of this relation, furnishes an affecting proof of the tenderness and the devotion of the son to his parents, and of their implicit trust and grateful pride in their child. And the pleasure was reserved to the father rarely enjoyed since time began, of seeing his son gradually forcing his way by his unaided abilities up the steps of the same ascent which he had trod before him, until he reached the last and highest which his country could supply. The case is unexampled in the history of popular governments. And when this event was fully accomplished, whilst the son was yet in the full enjoyment of his great dignity so honorably acquired, it was accorded to the old patriarch to go to his rest on the day above all other days in the year which was the most imperishably associated with his fame. Such things are not often read of even in the most gorgeous pictures of mortal felicity painted in Eastern story. They go far to relieve the darker shadows which fly over the ordinary paths of life, and to hold out the hope that, even under the present imperfect dispensation, it is not unreasonable to trust that virtue may meet with its just reward.

The mortal remains of John Adams and of his wife repose side by side in sarcophagi of stone, under a temple, in the town in which they resided in life, constructed since his decease, and consecrated to the worship of God. And a modest marble tablet, affixed to one of its walls within, surmounted by a bust of him from the chisel of Horatio Greenough, bears the following inscription prepared for the benefit of later generations, by his eldest son: —

LIBERTATEM, AMICITIAM, FIDEM, RETINEBIS

D. O. M.

Beneath these walls
Are deposited the mortal remains of

JOHN ADAMS.

Son of John and Susanna (Boylston) Adams,
Second President of the United States;
Born $\frac{19}{30}$ October, 1735.
On the Fourth of July, 1776,
He pledged his Life, Fortune, and sacred Honor
To the INDEPENDENCE OF HIS COUNTRY.
On the third of September, 1783,
He affixed his seal to the definitive treaty with Great Britain,
Which acknowledged that independence,
And consummated the redemption of his pledge.
On the Fourth of July, 1826,
He was summoned
To the Independence of Immortality,
And to the JUDGMENT OF HIS GOD.
This House will bear witness to his piety;
This Town, his birthplace, to his munificence;
History to his patriotism;
Posterity to the depth and compass of his mind.

At his side
Sleeps, till the trump shall sound,

ABIGAIL,

His beloved and only wife,
Daughter of William and Elizabeth (Quincy) Smith;
In every relation of life a pattern
Of filial, conjugal, maternal, and social virtue.
Born November $\frac{11}{22}$, 1744,
Deceased 28 October, 1818,
Aged 74.

Married 25 October, 1764.
During an union of more than half a century
They survived, in harmony of sentiment, principle, and affection
The tempests of civil commotion;
Meeting undaunted and surmounting
The terrors and trials of that Revolution,
Which secured the Freedom of their Country;
Improved the condition of their times;
And brightened the prospects of Futurity
To the race of man upon Earth.

PILGRIM.

From lives thus spent thy earthly duties learn;
From fancy's dreams to active virtue turn:
Let Freedom, Friendship, Faith, thy soul engage,
And serve, like them, thy country and thy age.

APPENDIX.

Considering the circumstances by which Mr. Adams was surrounded, his early papers are much the most remarkable of his life. Since this volume was completed, a copy of the following letter taken at the time has been received from the hands of the Honorable Josiah Quincy, the nephew of the person to whom it was addressed.

TO SAMUEL QUINCY.

22 April, 1761.

Dear Sir, — Since you claim a promise, I will perform as well as I can. The letter so long talked of, is but a mouse, though the offspring of a pregnant mountain. However, if amidst the cares of business, the gay diversions of the town, the sweet refreshments of private study, and the joyful expectations of approaching wedlock, you can steal a moment to read a letter from an old country friend, I shall cheerfully transcribe it, such as it is, without the least alteration, or the least labor to connect this preamble to the subsequent purview.

The review of an old letter from you upon original composition and original genius has raised a war in my mind. "Scraps of verse, sayings of philosophers," the received opinion of the world, and my own reflections upon all, have thrown my imagination into a turmoil like the reign of rumor in Milton, or the jarring elements in Ovid, where

nulli sua forma manebat.
Obstabatque aliis aliud,

a picture of which I am determined to draw.

Most writers have represented genius as a rare phenomenon, a Phœnix. Bolingbroke says: "God mingles sometimes, among the societies of men, a few and but a few of those on whom he is graciously pleased to bestow a larger portion of the ethereal spirit than in the ordinary course of his providence he bestows on the sons of men." Mr. Pope will tell you that this "*vivida vis animi* is to be found in very few, and that the utmost stretch of study, learning, and industry can never attain to this." Dr. Cheyne shall distinguish between his quick-thinkers and slow-thinkers, and insinuate that the former are extremely scarce.

We have a becoming reverence for the authority of these writers, and of many others of the same opinion; but we may be allowed to fear that the vanity of the human heart had too great a share in determining these writers to that opinion.

The same vanity which gave rise to that strange religious dogma, that God elected a precious few (of which few, however, every man who believed the doctrine is always one) to life eternal, without regard to any foreseen virtue, and reprobated all the rest, without regard to any foreseen vice. A doctrine which, with serious gravity, represents the world as under the government of humor and caprice, and which Hottentots and Mohawks would reject with horror.

If the orthodox doctrine of genius is not so detestable as that of unconditional election, it is not much less invidious nor much less hurtful. One represents eternal life as an unattainable thing without the special favor of the Father, and even with that, attainable by very few, one of a tribe, or two of a nation, and so tends to discourage the practice of virtue. The other represents the talents to excel as extremely scarce, indulged by nature to very few, and unattainable by all the rest, and therefore tends to discourage industry. You and I shall never be persuaded or frightened either by Popes or councils, poets or enthusiasts, to believe that the world of nature, learning, and grace is governed by such arbitrary will or inflexible fatality. We have much higher notions of the efficacy of human endeavors in all cases.

It is not improbable (as some men are taller, stronger, fairer, &c., than others) that some may be, by the constitution of their bodies, more sensible than others; so some may be said to be born with greater geniuses than others, and the middle point between that of the most perfect organization and the least perfect, in a healthy child, that is, not an idiot, nor a monster, is the point of common sense. It is therefore likely there are as many who have more than common sense, and so may be in different degrees denominated great geniuses, as there are who have less, and these, surely, will not by Mr. Pope, my Lord Bolingbroke, or Dr. Cheyne, be thought extremely few. The fallacy seems to lie here. We define genius to be the innate capacity, and then vouchsafe this flattering title only to those few who have been directed, by their birth, education, and lucky accidents, to distinguish themselves in arts and sciences, or in the execution of what the world calls great affairs, instead of planting corn, freighting oysters, and killing deer, the worthy employments in which most great geniuses are engaged; for, in truth, according to that definition, the world swarms with them.

Go down to the market-place, and inquire of the first butcher you see about his birth, education, and the fortunes of his life, and in the course of his rude history you will find as many instances of invention (Mr. Pope's criterion of genius) as you will find in the works of most of the celebrated poets. Go on board an oyster-boat and converse with the skipper; he will relate as many instances of invention, and intrepidity, too, as you will find in the lives of many British admirals who shine in history as the ornaments of their country. Inquire of a gunner in Braintree Bay, or of a hunter upon the frontiers of this province, and you will hear of as many artful devices to take their game as you will read in the lives of Cæsar, or Charles, or Frederick. And as genius is more common, it seems to me it is much more powerful than is generally thought. For this mighty favor of nature, of which the poets and orators, philosophers and legislators of the world have been in all ages so proud, and which has been represented as sufficient of itself to the formation of all those characters, is so far otherwise that if you pick out your great men from Greek or Roman, and from

English history, and suppose them born and bred in Esquimaux or Caffraria, Patagonia or Lapland, no man would imagine that any great effects from their genius would have appeared.

Mr. Pope tells us that De la Motte confesses, in whatever age Homer had lived, he must have been the greatest poet of his nation; but, in my humble opinion, Mr. Waller was nearer the truth, when he said that, in certain circumstances,

> "The conqueror of the world had been
> But the first wrestler on the green."

The gods sell all things to industry, and invention among the rest. The sequel upon industry you may possibly have some time or other, but remember it is not promised by J. A.

A.

(Page 133.)

The following copy of Dr. Franklin's letter to Thomas Cushing was probably taken by Mr. Adams, whilst the papers that accompanied it, one of which he also copied, were in his possession, during the month of April, 1773. It is given exactly as it was found. The discrepancy between it and the printed form is curious, though not so extensive as often occurs in letters written by the active men of the Revolution. It may easily be accounted for by the practice, not uncommon at that time, of preserving only the first draft, without being careful to insert the amendments and additions introduced into the perfect copy. In this way, many of Mr. Adams's earlier letters have been found to vary from the forms which he was in the habit of writing first in a book. The same practice probably gave occasion to the questions lately made of the authenticity of some of Washington's letters. Indeed, the various readings of the revolutionary manuscripts bid fair, in time, to form a body of literature, as large as those of the ancient classics.

But these diversities may not be all owing to the authors. Some of them will doubtless be traced to the printer. In one material instance, this is certainly the case here; an instance, it may be observed, in which the error has been already rectified by Mr. Bancroft in his history; the substitution of the word *work* for *wrath*.

London, 177 .

Sir, — I embrace this opportunity to acquaint you that there is lately fallen into my hands part of a correspondence, that I have reason to believe laid the foundation of most, if not all, our present grievances. I am not at liberty to tell through what channel I received it; and I have engaged that it shall not be printed, nor copies taken of it, or any part of it; but I am allowed [and desired [1]] to let it be seen by some men of worth in the Province, for their satisfaction

[1] Not in printed copy.

only. In confidence of your preserving *inviolably* my engagements, I send you inclosed the original letters, to obviate every pretence of unfairness in copying, interpolation, or omission. The hands of the gentlemen will be well known. Possibly, they may not like such an exposal of their conduct, however tenderly and privately it may be managed. But if they are good men,[1] and agree that all good men wish a good understanding and harmony to subsist between the Colonies and their mother country, they ought the less to regret that, at the small expense of their reputation for sincerity and public spirit among their compatriots, so desirable an event may in some degree be forwarded.

For my own part, I cannot but acknowledge that my resentment against this country, for its arbitrary measures in governing us, conducted by the late minister, has, since my conviction by these papers that those measures were projected, advised, and called for by men of character among ourselves, and whose advice must, therefore, be attended with all the weight that was proper to mislead, and which would therefore scarce fail of misleading; — my own resentment, I say, has by this means been considerably[2] abated. [I therefore wish I was[3]] at liberty to make the letters public; [but as I am not,] I can[4] allow them to be seen by yourself,[5] by Messrs. Bowdoin and Pitts, of the council, and Dr. Chauncy, Cooper, and Winthrop, with a few such other gentlemen as you may think it fit to show them to. After being some months in your possession, you are requested to return them to me.

As to the writers, I can easily as well as charitably conceive it possible that [a man,[6]] educated in prepossession of the unbounded authority of parliament, &c., may think unjustifiable every opposition even to its unconstitutional exactions, and imagine it their duty to suppress, as much as in them lies, such oppositions. But, when I find them bartering away the liberties of their native country for posts, and negotiating for salaries and pensions, [for which the money is to be squeezed[7]] from the people; and conscious of the odium these might be attended with, calling for troops to protect and secure the enjoyment of them; when I see them exciting jealousies in the Crown, and provoking it to wrath against [a great part of its[8]] faithful subjects; creating enmities between the different countries of which the empire consists; occasioning a great expense to the new country for the payment of needless gratifications to useless officers and enemies; and to the old for suppressing or preventing imaginary rebellions in the new: I cannot but doubt their sincerity even in the political principles they profess; and deem them mere time-servers, seeking their own private emolument, through any quantity of public mischief; betrayers of the interest, not of their native country only, but of the government they pretend to serve, and of the whole English empire.

With the greatest esteem and respect,
I remain your most humble servant.

1 "or pretend to be such," in printed copy, here omitted.
2 "exceedingly," in printed copy.
3 "I think they must have the same effect with you. But I am not, as I have said," in printed copy.
4 "only"
5 "by the other gentlemen of the Committee of Correspondence,"
6 "men"
7 "extorted"
8 "so great a part of its most"

B.

(Page 320.)

EXTRACT FROM THE BOSTON PATRIOT, 15 MAY, 1811.

THAT Dr. Franklin wrote many other letters with the same benevolent sentiments, and with a view to the same effect, is very probable, but I never made any inquiry after them, as all things were finally settled to my satisfaction, and I had other business of more importance to engage me. One other letter I know he wrote, for I have seen it, more severe than this; and I regret that I have not a copy of it to send you. One sentence only I remember, and that may serve to designate it. For I know that copies of these letters were scattered about the States, some of which are now in Boston. The sentence I mean is this: "Mr. Adams is always an honest man, and often a wise one, but he is sometimes completely out of his senses."

I hope your readers will indulge me while I make a few observations on these letters.

1. In the Count de Vergennes's first letter to Dr. Franklin, that of the 30th of June, 1780, it appears that Dr. Franklin had requested the Count to revoke the orders which had been sent to the French minister at Philadelphia, relative to the resolution of congress of the 18th of March, for redeeming the paper money at forty for one, and this request is stated to be at the invitation of Mr. Adams.

Now I have no remembrance of any such invitation. It is impossible for me to recollect all the transient conversations I have had with Dr. Franklin in the seven years' intimate acquaintance that I had with him in Europe. But as the resolution of congress, and the offence the Count took at it, and the orders he had given to the Chevalier de la Luzerne to apply to congress for a payment of all paper money in possession of Frenchmen at dollar for dollar, were in everybody's mouth, it is extremely probable that I might say to Dr. Franklin, in private conversation, that I was apprehensive of very ill consequences from those orders, that they might excite disputes and heats in congress and in the nation which would excite suspicions between the two countries, and weaken the confidence in the alliance. And, I might add, that I thought some representation ought to be made to the Count, showing the unreasonableness of those orders, and that they were not well founded.[1] But it is not likely that I authorized Dr. Franklin to make use of my name.

2. But if I had, the question arises, did Dr. Franklin believe those orders to be just or unjust? If he thought them just, he ought not to have applied to the Count to repeal them, though Mr. Adams and twenty other Americans had invited him to do so. If he thought them unjust, he ought to have made his own candid representation, and request to have them repealed; and Mr. Adams's opinion, though in coincidence with his own, would have made no addition to the influence of that request, because Mr. Adams's opinion was sufficiently known before. Why, then, was Mr. Adams's name brought into view? As Mr Lovell hinted, the truth in this case lies not at the bottom of a deep well.

[1] Mr. Adams did this by letter, printed in vol. vii. p. 203.

3. Is there not a gross inconsistency in demanding or requesting the Count to recall his orders, if Dr. Franklin did not himself think they ought to be recalled? And is there not a consummate absurdity in demanding a repeal of those orders, at Mr. Adams's invitation, if he thought Mr. Adams's invitation ill-founded? Why, then, did not Dr. Franklin express candidly and decidedly his own opinion of the rectitude or obliquity of the orders and the justice of Mr. Adams's invitation, or the impropriety of it? Is it possible to read this grave and clumsy intrigue without feeling the ridicule and satire of it?

4. Is it possible to believe that Dr. Franklin was so ignorant as not to see the iniquity of the French claim of silver dollar for paper dollar, when American citizens were to receive but one for forty? He had experience enough of paper money in New England, in Pennsylvania, and in the continental currency, to know its nature. Had he not sagacity enough to perceive the millions of frauds that would be practised under this distinction? That every man who possessed paper money would be glad to hire a Frenchman to take it and demand the silver for it as his own? Did he not see the jealousies, the envy and the execrations which would be excited among all American citizens against all Frenchmen, by such an arbitrary and oppressive distinction in their favor? The answer is very obvious. Such candor would have defeated the whole plot.

5. The Count de Vergennes mentions a letter from me to him of the 22d of June, 1780, in answer to one from his Excellency, but he makes no essay to answer any of the arguments in that letter. He denies none of the facts. He shows none of the reasoning to be inconclusive. He shows no inference or conclusion to be unfairly drawn. All this was impossible, and an attempt to do it would only have rendered him or his clerks, who probably wrote the letter for him, ridiculous. And this was very possibly one cause of his anger. He saw his project so clearly and fairly stated, so irrefragably refuted, and the iniquity and absurdity of it so fully, and yet so candidly and decently demonstrated, that he was ashamed of it. But having previously and rashly sent his instructions to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, he had it not in his power to recall them, and was too proud to retract them. No. Reason was to be overborne by authority. The great character of the Count de Vergennes, the great respect for the court of Versailles, the gratitude of America to France, all reinforced by Dr. Franklin's overbearing fame, were to carry all before them. And the dogmatical pomposity of '*longue discussion*,' '*raisonnements abstraits*,' '*des hypothèses*,' '*des calculs qui n'ont que des bases idéales*,' '*des principes qui ne sont rien moins qu'analogues à l'alliance*,' were to refute mathematical demonstration, and prove that, in the case of a Frenchman, one was equal to forty, though in the case of an American, forty were necessary to an equation with forty.

6. The Count, and he says the King, was persuaded that the Doctor was fully of opinion with him; that is to say, in favor of the orders. How did he know this? The Doctor had expressly, and in writing, demanded or requested a repeal of the orders, which implied, if it did not express, that he thought them wrong. Did he think Dr. Franklin a hypocrite, demanding a repeal of orders that he thought wise and upright? Or did he think Dr. Franklin a tool of Mr. Adams's, prostituting the sacred character of an ambassador in complaisance to him, or in fear of his influence? No. The Count knew full well, before this time, that the Doctor had no such complaisance for Mr. Adams, nor any such fear

of him. No. There is no conceivable way of accounting for this strange phenomenon, but by supposing that the whole business was previously concerted between the minister and the ambassador, to crush Mr. Adams and get possession of his commission for peace. No expression can be too vulgar for so low an intrigue, for so base a trick. It was an enormous beetle to kill a fly. It must be acknowledged that no beetle was ever more clumsily constructed or more unskilfully wielded.

They wholly misconceived the character of that congress whom they meant to manage. Not a member of it was deceived. The artifice was seen by every one; and, although their fortitude did not prove quite equal to their sagacity, their zeal to please the French produced but two resolutions at that time to make America or Mr. Lovell blush. And one of these errors was afterwards completely rectified by Mr. Adams, with the aid of Mr. Jay, though at the hazard of censure. The other was never corrected. I mean the annihilation of the commission for a treaty of commerce with England.

7. I know of no right that any government has to require of an ambassador from a foreign power to transmit to his constituents any complaints against his colleagues, much less to write libels against them. France had an ambassador at congress. It was quite sufficient to transmit complaints to their own minister and order him to present them. They had no claim upon Franklin. He proved himself, however, a willing auxiliary, but it was at the expense of his duty and his character. If he had been explicitly censured for it by congress, it would not have been unjust. He has been censured for it by all who ever understood the transaction; and justice to myself and my posterity, justice to my country, and fidelity to every principle of truth, honor, and public and private virtue will justify me in explaining this dark transaction to posterity.

8. The Count did not find congress "*imbu d'autres principes que ceux de M. Adams.*" Congress, by a unanimous resolution, which will stand forever upon its records, approved of my part of this correspondence in opposition to all the representations of the Count, the Doctor, the Chevalier, and M. Marbois, whatever they might be.

9. It seems that the Count was not perfectly satisfied that his first letter, of the 30th of June, and the Doctor's representations to congress in obedience to it, would be sufficient to accomplish all his purposes. This thunderbolt, flaming and deadly as it was, must be followed by another still more loud and terrible, to bellow throughout America, and, consequently, over all the world. On the 31st of July, 1780, he writes another letter to Dr. Franklin, in which he more distinctly explains his design and desire to get Mr. Adams removed from his commission for peace. He incloses fresh copies of our correspondence, and in his own name, not now in the king's name, desires that they may be sent to congress. The king's approbation of this letter, I have reason to believe, could not have been obtained. For I know that after this correspondence had been laid before the king, his majesty made particular inquiries concerning the character of Mr. Adams, of the Count de Rochambeau and the Marquis de Lafayette, among others, and said to both of them, at different times, that "he had a great esteem of Mr. Adams." Congress, however, were to have line upon line, and precept upon precept. I had transmitted copies of all the letters as fast as they were written. The Count had transmitted copies before the 30th of June. Dr.

Franklin transmitted copies immediately afterwards, and now, the 31st of July, fresh copies were to be sent. Copies enough! for I had sent duplicates and triplicates.

10. The opinions of which the Count complains, were founded in eternal truth and justice; and were unanimously adjudged to be so by congress. The turn or manner which offended him was not adopted, in the smallest degree, until he had given me provocations which human nature could not pass unnoticed with honor. And I have never heard of one member of congress, nor any other gentleman who ever read the letters, who thought any of my expressions too strong or unguarded, or that they could be construed in any degree so justly offensive as many of his expressions to me, previously given without provocation. I had the advice and approbation of Chief Justice Dana, then with me as secretary of the legation for peace, to every clause and word in the whole correspondence. He said the Count neither wrote like a gentleman himself, nor treated me like a gentleman; and that it was indispensably necessary that we should show him that we had some understanding and some feeling.

The expressions "that congress may judge whether Mr. Adams is endowed with the spirit of conciliation which becomes a business so important and delicate as that which is confided to him," brought the matter home to the business and bosoms of congress. The design could no longer be concealed. I had no other business at that time confided to me but my commissions for peace and a treaty of commerce with Great Britain. The latter he intended to destroy, and in this he succeeded.

11. We are now arrived at Dr. Franklin's letter to congress of the 9th of August, 1780. To any man who thoroughly knew that philosopher and politician, this letter is as perfect a portrait of his character as the pencil of Stuart could have painted of his face or figure. I shall leave the most of its features to the reader's inspection and contemplation, and point only at a few.

I shall not object to the expression, "Mr. Adams has given offence to this court," though the Count de Vergennes was the only member of it who ever manifested any resentment that came to my knowledge. The behavior of the King, the Queen, and all the royal family, as well as of all the other ministers of State and all their *commis*, was the same towards me after as before this controversy; and the Count himself never expressed to me personally the least uneasiness. And no very long period passed away, before he thought it necessary, or prudent, or politic, without the smallest concession or apology on my part, to overwhelm me with attentions and civilities, not only in his own person, but by his amiable Countess.

12. I have never been able to see "the duty" of a minister to complain to congress of an offence given by a brother minister to a foreign court. If the offence is so slight that the court itself thinks it unnecessary to complain of it, the minister, surely, is not obliged officially to interfere. If it is grave enough for the court to complain, its own ambassador is the proper channel through which to convey the accusation, which, if it is well founded, will very rarely, if ever, fail of producing its desired effect.

13. Nor was I ever convinced of the right of a court to require, or of a minister of State to desire an ambassador to become their auxiliary in a quarrel with his brother. It has ever appeared unjust as well as ungenerous to excite quar-

rels between two ministers from the same master, two brothers of the same family, on account of disputes between the court or minister and one of them. A court is always competent to vindicate its own quarrels with an ambassador, if it is in the right.

14. Dr. Franklin's "reluctance" upon this occasion, I believe, was not implicitly believed by congress, if it was by any individual member of that sagacious body. Sure I am that I have never given the smallest credit to it. The majority, at least, of that congress, if not every member of it, saw, as I have always seen, that it was Dr. Franklin's heart's desire to avail himself of these means and this opportunity to strike Mr. Adams out of existence as a public minister, and get himself into his place.

15. As early as the month of June or July, 1778, within three or four months after my first arrival in France, I had written to my most intimate friends in congress, particularly and largely to Mr. Samuel Adams, the same sentiments which Dr. Franklin says he had written to Mr. Lovell, recommending that two of us should be recalled, or sent elsewhere. My letter was shown to Mr. Richard Henry Lee and all his friends, who joined cordially in the removal of his brother Arthur Lee and me, and in the appointment of Dr. Franklin as sole minister at the court of Versailles. Mr. Richard Henry Lee wrote me at the time, that he had read my letter, and entirely agreed with me in the sentiments of it. I was, therefore, sufficiently aware of the inconveniences Dr. Franklin mentioned, and endeavored to the utmost of my power to avoid them. I had seen opposition and contention and confusion enough between Dr. Franklin, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Izard, and enough of the ruinous effects of them to be put sufficiently upon my guard. But there is not a possibility of guarding against all the insidious wiles of intriguing politicians. If a man can preserve his integrity and the essential interest of his country, he will do great things. He must expect to expose his person to dangers, and his reputation to obloquy and calumny in abundance.

16. Next comes a paragraph, which is a downright falsehood. I cannot say that the Doctor knew it to be false. But it is very strange if he did not, for his intimate friend, Mr. Chaumont, in whose house he lived, and whom he saw almost every day, and Mr. Monthieu, another of his intimate friends, knew better. And it is very unaccountable that they had not informed him of a transaction in which they were both employed by the Count de Vergennes, in which they were animated with so much zeal and personal interest. But I will charitably suppose that he was sincere and believed what he said, which is no small concession. Let us analyze this curious assertion.

"Mr. Adams's proper business is elsewhere." Where was his proper business? Should he have gone to London, as Lord North said he wished I had? If I had, and my character as an ambassador had been respected, and myself not beheaded on Tower Hill, nor thrown into prison as Mr. Laurens was, long afterwards, would not my residence in London, besides being intolerably disagreeable to me, have been a perpetual source of jealousy to the French court and nation?

Should I have gone to Madrid? Spain had not acknowledged our independence. And, besides, Mr. Jay was sent to Spain, and there would have been the same room for jealousy of my interfering with his negotiations, as there was at Paris

Should I have gone to Holland? There I wanted to go, and had always intended to go, as soon as I had paid my respects to the French court, informed them of my desire to go, and obtained their consent and their passport, without which I could not stir. I arrived in Paris in February, was presented to the King in my new character, communicated my mission to the Count de Vergennes, and in one fortnight, certainly in one month, early in the month of March, I applied to the Count for a passport to Holland, where I wished to go as a traveller. His Excellency was very much averse to my going; said perhaps he should have to consult with me upon subjects relative to my mission, desired I would come to court at least weekly on ambassador's days, and dine with him. At least, he desired I would postpone my journey for some time, and advised me to stay till the month of May, when he said I should see the country in all its beauty and glory. I repeated my request from time to time, but was always put off till May, when I applied again, but was still evaded. He was not quite ready to let me go, and in this manner I was refused a passport till midsummer. And then I should not probably have obtained it, if the controversy which arose had not made him wish to get rid of me. This controversy arose in the following manner.

After the arrival of the news from America of the resolution of congress of the 18th of March, 1780, for the redemption of the paper money at forty for one, which perhaps would have been more justly redeemed at seventy for one, M. Leray de Chaumont, Dr. Franklin's landlord and intimate friend and companion, and M. Monthieu, another of his intimate friends, came to visit me in my apartments at the Hotel de Valois, Rue de Richelieu, in Paris, and informed me that they came to me at the request of the Count de Vergennes, who wished to see me and consult with me concerning that resolution of congress which they said had excited a sensation in France, and an alarm at court. These gentlemen were personally, and, as they said, deeply interested in this question of paper money, and entered into a great deal of conversation with me upon the subject. I endeavored to show them the equity, the policy, and the necessity of the measure, and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of making any distinction between natives and foreigners, as well as between Frenchmen and other foreigners. All this conversation passed with the utmost coolness, civility, and good-humor on all sides, and concluded with a message from the Count de Vergennes, requesting me to go to Versailles, and confer with him on the subject. The next morning I went. The Count received me politely, as usual, and informed me that he had written to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, to apply to congress for a repeal of their resolution of the 18th of March, relative to paper money; or at least as far as it respected foreigners, and especially Frenchmen. I answered his Excellency very respectfully and very calmly, endeavoring to explain to him as well as I was able the nature of the subject, the necessity of the measure, and the difficulty and the danger of making any distinctions in favor of foreigners. The conversation was long, and though the Count was very earnest and zealous for a distinction in favor of his nation, it was very decent and civil on both sides. Upon my saying that I knew not whether I had been able to explain myself to his Excellency in French, so as to be perfectly understood, he said he would write to me, for he said he wanted me to join him in his representations to congress. Accordingly, in a few days, I received his letter, proposing and recommending all the things which

he mentioned to me in conversation. I might easily have been as wise upon this occasion as Dr. Franklin, and transmitted the Count's letter to congress, and recommended it to their serious consideration, and, in my answer to the Count, have informed him that I had done so, without expressing any opinion of my own in writing either to congress or his Excellency. But such duplicity was not in my character. I thought it my indispensable duty to my country and to congress, to France and the Count himself, to be explicit. I answered his letter with entire respect and decency, but with perspicuity and precision, expressing my own judgment upon the subject, with the reasons on which it was founded. As I could see no practicability of any distinction of all I mentioned now, but I thought, if any was equitable, it would be in favor of American soldiers and early creditors, who had lent gold to the United States, and not in favor of foreigners who had sold nothing in America till the currency had depreciated, and who had sold, perhaps, most of their merchandises after it had undergone its lowest depreciation. However, upon the receipt of my letter the Count fell into a passion, and wrote me a passionate and ungentlemanly reply. I was piqued a little, and wrote him, as I thought, a decent, though, in a few expressions, a gently tingling rejoinder. This was insufferable; and now, both the Count and the Doctor, I suppose, thought they had got enough to demolish me, and get my commission. And I doubt not the Count was sanguine enough to hope that he had got our fisheries, our limits, and a truce secured to his mind, though the Doctor, I believe, did not extend his views and wishes so far. He aimed, I presume, only at the commission.

I now leave your readers to judge whether the Doctor had sufficient reason to complain to congress against me for officially intermeddling in his department; and this from ennui and idleness. I never in my life was more busily employed; for, the three or four months that I was detained in Paris, wholly against my will, by the Count de Vergennes himself, I had to improve myself in the French language, to which, two years before, I was an entire stranger. I had the French laws and government, customs, institutions, literature, principles and manners to study. I had innumerable volumes to read of former and later negotiations, besides making every possibly inquiry concerning every thing that could have relation to my mission for peace. I had not a moment to spare, and always occupations much more agreeable to me than any thing that was to be said or done in Dr. Franklin's political department. This affair of the currency was no more in his department than it was in mine or the Count de Vergennes's. Neither of us had any instructions concerning it, but as private citizens, and when the Count asked me any question about it, I had as good a right to answer him as the Doctor had. It is true, I did not show my letters to the Doctor. I was not desired by the Count to consult with him. I had no doubt upon the subject. From a year's residence with him, in 1778 and 1779, in the same family, I knew his extreme indolence and dissipation, and, consequently, that I might call upon him half a dozen times and not find him at home; and if I found him, it might be a week before I could get his opinion, and perhaps never.

17. "He thinks that America has been too free in expressions of gratitude to France; for that she is more obliged to us than we to her." I cannot, or at least will not deny this accusation, for it was my opinion at that time, has been

ever since, and is so now. Whether it was prudent at that time to express such an opinion is a question. I am not accused of saying it to any Frenchman, and I am satisfied I had not. Dr. Franklin might have complained of it to the Count, for any thing that I knew, as well as to congress, but that was his indiscretion. Conversations in private, in the freedom and familiarity of friendship and social intercourse, are not innocently to be betrayed for malicious purposes. If I had written to congress all the indiscreet sayings of Dr. Franklin that I have heard him utter, I might have rendered him very odious and very ridiculous in America. I will give one example very much to the present purpose, because it explains the system of his conduct. He has said to me, not only once or twice, but many times, that congress were out in their policy in sending so many ministers to several courts in Europe; that all their affairs in Europe ought to be under one direction, and that the French court ought to be the centre; that one minister was quite sufficient for all American affairs in Europe! It is not at all unlikely to me that he had expressed the same opinion to the Count and to many of his friends. I do not know, however, that he did. This sentiment, however, appears as extravagantly complaisant to the French and to himself, as mine can be thought extravagantly complaisant to America. If I had transmitted this wise saying, and many others, of the great philosopher to congress, it would have transpired, and the people as well as congress have thought him very ambitious, very licentious, and very eager and grasping at power. The wits might have recollected the solemn saying of Tamerlane, that "it was neither agreeable nor decent that there should be two kings upon earth; for that the whole globe was too small for the ambition of a great prince."

18. "He thinks that we should show spirit." "I apprehend he mistakes his ground, and that this court is to be treated with decency and delicacy." Spirit and delicacy are very compatible. But here lies the sophistry of the false accuser. He has put the sentiment into obnoxious language of his own, to excite a prejudice against me. But all the sentiment that I ever expressed of this kind was common to the two Mr. Lees, to Mr. Izard, to Mr. Jay, to Mr. Dana, and every other honest man from America I ever acted or conversed with in Europe. The sentiment was that we ought not to be wheedled out of our rights, nor pillaged of the little money we borrowed for the necessities of our country, by a multitude of little agents of ministers or underlings of those agents; in short, in modern language, by intriguing X's Y's, and Z's, for there were such letters in the alphabet under the royal government as there have been since under the directorial republic. I thought, with all those wise and upright ministers just named, that we ought to be candid and explicit with the French ministry, and represent to them that we acted for a young and virtuous republic, but not as yet rich; frugal and parsimonious, even perhaps to a fault, of their public money; and that we never could justify either negligence or profusion. I thought, with every one of those gentlemen, that Dr. Franklin and Mr. Deane had been too compliant and too servile to those little stirring bodies, and, in plain English, had suffered our country to be cheated, shamefully cheated, to a large amount.

19. "The King, a young and virtuous prince, has a pleasure in reflecting on the generous benevolence of the action," &c.

In this I agree with Dr. Franklin. The king was the best and sincerest friend we had in France, and would not have suffered us to be injured or deceived. But kings are surrounded by others, arranged in a great scale of subordination, some of whom, by force or art, will do what they please; and kings, as Louis the Fifteenth often said, though they know it to be wrong, cannot help it.

20. "M. de Vergennes, who appears much offended, told me yesterday, that he would enter into no further discussions with Mr. Adams, nor answer any more of his letters."

This, no doubt, the Doctor thought was the finishing stroke. The argument was irresistible. The Count will neither speak nor write to Mr. Adams. The Count is to be the pacificator of the four quarters of the world. The American minister must consult the Count upon every point, and agree to nothing without his advice and consent. Mr. Adams, therefore, can never consult him or get his advice and consent to any thing. The consequence is certain, Mr. Adams must be recalled. And, no doubt, another consequence is equally clear, and that is, that Dr. Franklin will be appointed to the place; for he is on the spot, and will be always ready to consult, to take advice, and to ask consent. And, moreover, who in the world has such a name as Dr. Franklin?

21. "He says the ideas of this court and those of the people of America are so totally different that it is impossible for any minister to please both." Nothing is more probable than that I had said as much as this a hundred times to Dr. Franklin, when I lived with him and acted with him under the same commission in 1778 and 1779; for scarcely any thing pressed more heavily upon my mind. I knew it to be true. I knew it to be impossible to give any kind of satisfaction to our constituents, that is, to congress or their constituents, while we consented or connived at such irregular transactions, such arbitrary proceedings, and such contemptible peculations as had been practised in Mr. Deane's time, not only while he was in France, alone, without any public character, but even while he was associated with Dr. Franklin and Mr. Arthur Lee in a real commission; and which were continued in some degree, while I was combined in the commission with Franklin and Lee, in spite of all the opposition and remonstrances that Lee and I could make; and which were still continued in some degree, though in nothing more atrocious than this new attempt to make America pay their French friends dollar for dollar.

It would require volumes to give a history of these abuses. A few of them may be hinted at. Du Coudray's contract for a hundred officers of artillery, at extravagant pay during the war and half pay for life, with Du Coudray at their head, to take rank of all the officers in our army, except the commander-in-chief, to receive no orders but from him, and to have the command of all the artillery and military manufactures throughout the continent. Though congress could not think a moment of confirming this contract, it cost them an immense sum for the pay and passages of these officers to this country and back to France. The other contract for old magazines of muskets, swords, and bayonets, which were found to be useless, though they cost a large sum of money. The scheme that was laid to get Marshal Maillebois appointed commander-in-chief of the American army, in the room of General Washington, &c., &c., &c.

I thought the statesmen in France ought to have more generous views and to be wiser politicians than such symptoms indicated; that they ought to know

better the people they had to deal with; that they ought to avoid every thing that could excite jealousies in America, lessen the gratitude of our citizens, and weaken or destroy their confidence in France. These sentiments I always expressed freely to Dr. Franklin, and it is for want of attention to these sentiments that we have been more than once in danger of a war with France; as we have been very lately, if we are not at this moment. Though a war with France may become inevitable, as it has been partially, in 1798, I own I know of no greater error that France can commit than to force us into a war with her, nor any greater calamity that America can suffer than to be forced into a war with France, and an alliance, offensive and defensive, with Great Britain. This opinion and this sentiment determined me to embrace the first opportunity that presented in 1798, 1799, and 1800, consistent with the honor of the nation, to make peace with France. I should not have thought this of so much importance at that time, if I had not been apprehensive that the British party would force us into an alliance with Great Britain, our perpetual rival in commerce and manufactures all over the globe, and the natural as well as habitual enemy of the United States, especially of New England.

22. If the Count did in reality tell the Doctor, "that he would enter into no further discussions with Mr. Adams, nor answer any more of his letters," the Count was compelled, a year afterwards, to send for Mr. Adams to the Hague, to invite him to Versailles, to enter into discussions with him and to answer his letters, and, I will add, to treat him with more marked attention and studied civilities than ever he had done, as has been in part related before, in the account of the correspondence upon the articles proposed by the two mediating powers.

23. "He" (Mr. Adams) "is gone to Holland to try, as he told me, whether something might not be done to render us a little less dependent on France."

It is difficult to read this accusation, grave and solemn as it is, without a smile. Yes! It is highly probable that I said to Dr. Franklin, more than once or twice, that I thought we might, and hoped we should, be able to borrow a little money in Holland, that we might be a little less troublesome and burdensome to France; and something, too, to prevent Holland from joining England in the war against us, which England was determined to compel her to do, which a great part of the Dutch hoped and all the rest feared, and which Europe in general expected. Was this a crime? Was dependence upon France an object of ambition to America? If dependence had been our object, we might have had enough of it without solicitation, under England. Was France avaricious of a monopoly of our dependence? The Count de Vergennes was, I believe; but I never suspected it of the King, or any other of his ministers or any other Frenchman, but the secretary of foreign affairs and perhaps a few of his confidential dependents. But this exclusive dependence was a material, an essential part of that strange and ungenerous system of finesse, I cannot call it policy, towards America, which the Count had combined and presented in a memorial to the King before our Revolution, which was found among M. Turgot's papers, I believe, and printed by the National Assembly many years after the peace of 1783, in a volume called "*Politique de tous les cabinets de l'Europe.*" This system he pursued from first to last, and the publication of it is a confirmation of all that was ever said or thought of the Count by me or Mr. Jay. The

Count then might be offended at my journey to Holland, and the design of it; and to irritate him, the Doctor might inform him of it, as he did congress. But congress, instead of taking offence at my plan or reprehending me for entertaining it, or for communicating it to Dr. Franklin, highly approved it, and sent me power to execute it, which must have made the Doctor feel rather unpleasantly, and certainly his letter very ridiculous. In spite of all the Count's opposition, congress did in fact honorably and perseveringly support me through a very long and very fiery ordeal, till the arts of England were defeated, a treaty ratified, and so much money obtained as made us completely independent of France for that article, from that time to this.

23. The "opinion lately showing itself in Paris, that we seek a difference, and with a view of reconciling ourselves to England," was and is wholly unknown to me. Who were the Americans who had of late been very indiscreet in their conversations, is not explained, and had not come to my knowledge. I recollect but one, who came over from England in a rage, and cursed and swore in his hotel; but the French conceived no jealousy from him. They considered him as a "*Monsieur Jean Bull qui a plus d'argent que de l'esprit*," and cared nothing for his brutality as long as they got his money.

24. I ought not to omit, upon this occasion, to say, because possibly no other person can say it or will say it. — Dr. Franklin has been accused of plagiarism in publishing that very ancient and very ingenious fable in favor of toleration. I have had opportunity to know that the Doctor never claimed the right to it, or pretended that it was his own. It was inserted in his works by an editor or printer in his absence and without his consent.

Surmises have also been insinuated concerning Dr. Franklin, relative to M. Beaumarchais's claim, and especially the million of livres which the Count de Vergennes called the secret of the cabinet. I have never suspected, but, on the contrary, have always been fully convinced that Dr. Franklin was as innocent in both these transactions as any man in America was. Nor did I ever suspect the Count de Vergennes, at least in the affair of Beaumarchais. I had my suspicion of others; but these surmises were founded on no proof, and were suggested by circumstances that could fix upon no one person, and if they could, would not be sufficient to convict a gypsy of a petty larceny. As I consider the loss as irremediable, I shall say no more. I have considered those subjects as X, Y, and Z intrigues, and that of Beaumarchais at least as mortifying to the Count de Vergennes as to Dr. Franklin, and as much out of the power of the one as the other to prevent.

25. Mr. Jefferson has said that Dr. Franklin was an honor to human nature. And so, indeed, he was. Had he been an ordinary man, I should never have taken the trouble to expose the turpitude of his intrigues, or to vindicate my reputation against his vilifications and calumnies. But the temple of human nature has two great apartments: the intellectual and the moral. If there is not a mutual friendship and strict alliance between these, degradation to the whole building must be the consequence. There may be blots on the disk of the most refulgent luminary, almost sufficient to eclipse it. And it is of great importance to the rising generation in this country that they be put upon their guard against being dazzled by the surrounding blaze into an idolatry to the spots. If the affable archangel understood the standard of merit, that

Great or bright infers not excellence,

Franklin's moral character can neither be applauded nor condemned, without discrimination and many limitations.

To all those talents and qualities for the foundation of a great and lasting character, which were held up to the view of the whole world by the university of Oxford, the Royal Society of London, and the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris, were added, it is believed, more artificial modes of diffusing, celebrating, and exaggerating his reputation, than were ever before or since practised in favor of any individual.

His reputation was more universal than that of Leibnitz or Newton, Frederick or Voltaire, and his character more beloved and esteemed than any or all of them. Newton had astonished perhaps forty or fifty men in Europe; for not more than that number, probably, at any one time had read him and understood him by his discoveries and demonstrations. And these being held in admiration in their respective countries as at the head of the philosophers, had spread among scientific people a mysterious wonder at the genius of this perhaps the greatest man that ever lived. But this fame was confined to men of letters. The common people knew little and cared nothing about such a recluse philosopher. Leibnitz's name was more confined still. Frederick was hated by more than half of Europe as much as Louis the Fourteenth was, and as Napoleon is. Voltaire, whose name was more universal than any of those before mentioned, was considered as a vain, profligate wit, and not much esteemed or beloved by anybody, though admired by all who knew his works. But Franklin's fame was universal. His name was familiar to government and people, to kings, courtiers, nobility, clergy, and philosophers, as well as plebeians, to such a degree that there was scarcely a peasant or a citizen, a *valet de chambre*, coachman or footman, a lady's chambermaid or a scullion in a kitchen, who was not familiar with it, and who did not consider him as a friend to human kind. When they spoke of him, they seemed to think he was to restore the golden age. They seemed enraptured enough to exclaim

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.

To develop that complication of causes, which conspired to produce so singular a phenomenon, is far beyond my means or forces. Perhaps it can never be done without a complete history of the philosophy and politics of the eighteenth century. Such a work would be one of the most important that ever was written; much more interesting to this and future ages than the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," splendid and useful as that is. La Harpe promised a history of the philosophy of the eighteenth century; but he died and left us only a few fragments. Without going back to Lord Herbert, to Hobbes, to Mandeville, or to a host of more obscure infidels, both in England, France, and Germany, it is enough to say that four of the finest writers that Great Britain ever produced, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Gibbon, whose labors were translated into all languages, and three of the most eloquent writers that ever lived in France, whose works were also translated into all languages, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Raynal, seem to have made it the study of their lives and the object of their most strenuous exertions, to render mankind in Europe discontented with their situation in life, and with the state of society, both in religion and government. Princes and courtiers as well as citizens and countrymen,

clergy as well as laity, became infected. The King of Prussia, the Empress Catherine, were open and undisguised. The Emperor Joseph the Second was suspected, and even the excellent and amiable King of France grew impatient and uneasy under the fatiguing ceremonies of the Catholic church. All these and many more were professed admirers of Mr. Franklin. He was considered as a citizen of the world, a friend to all men and an enemy to none. His rigorous taciturnity was very favorable to this singular felicity. He conversed only with individuals, and freely only with confidential friends. In company he was totally silent.

When the association of Encyclopedists was formed, Mr. Franklin was considered as a friend and zealous promoter of that great enterprise, which engaged all their praises. When the society of economists was commencing, he became one of them, and was solemnly ordained a knight of the order by the laying on the hands of Dr. Quesnay, the father and founder of that sect. This effectually secured the affections and the panegyrics of that numerous society of men of letters. He had been educated a printer, and had practised his art in Boston, Philadelphia, and London for many years, where he not only learned the full power of the press to exalt and to spread a man's fame, but acquired the intimacy and the correspondence of many men of that profession, with all their editors and many of their correspondents. This whole tribe became enamoured and proud of Mr. Franklin as a member of their body, and were consequently always ready and eager to publish and embellish any panegyric upon him that they could procure. Throughout his whole life he courted and was courted by the printers, editors, and correspondents of reviews, magazines, journals, and pamphleteers, and those little busy meddling scribblers that are always buzzing about the press in America, England, France, and Holland. These, together with some of the clerks in the Count de Vergennes's office of interpreters, (*bureau des interprètes,*) filled all the gazettes of Europe with incessant praises of Monsieur Franklin. If a collection could be made of all the Gazettes of Europe for the latter half of the eighteenth century, a greater number of panegyrical paragraphs upon "*le grand Franklin*" would appear, it is believed, than upon any other man that ever lived.

While he had the singular felicity to enjoy the entire esteem and affection of all the philosophers of every denomination, he was not less regarded by all the sects and denominations of Christians. The Catholics thought him almost a Catholic. The Church of England claimed him as one of them. The Presbyterians thought him half a Presbyterian, and the Friends believed him a wet Quaker. The dissenting clergymen in England and America were among the most distinguished asserters and propagators of his renown. Indeed, all sects considered him, and I believe justly, a friend to unlimited toleration in matters of religion.

Nothing, perhaps, that ever occurred upon this earth was so well calculated to give any man an extensive and universal celebrity as the discovery of the efficacy of iron points and the invention of lightning-rods. The idea was one of the most sublime that ever entered a human imagination, that a mortal should disarm the clouds of heaven, and almost "snatch from his hand the sceptre and the rod." The ancients would have enrolled him with Bacchus and Ceres, Hercules and Minerva. His *Paratonnères* erected their heads in all parts of the world, on

temples and palaces no less than on cottages of peasants and the habitations of ordinary citizens. These visible objects reminded all men of the name and character of their inventor; and, in the course of time, have not only tranquillized the minds, and dissipated the fears of the tender sex and their timorous children, but have almost annihilated that panic terror and superstitious horror which was once almost universal in violent storms of thunder and lightning. To condense all the rays of this glory to a focus, to sum it up in a single line, to impress it on every mind and transmit it to all posterity, a motto was devised for his picture, and soon became familiar to the memory of every school-boy who understood a word of Latin: —

"Eripuit cœlo fulmen sceptrumque tyrannis."

Thus it appeared at first, and the author of it was held in a mysterious obscurity. But, after some time, M. Turgot altered it to

"Eripuit cœlo fulmen; mox sceptra tyrannis."

By the first line, the rulers of Great Britain and their arbitrary oppressions of the Colonies were alone understood. By the second was intimated that Mr. Franklin was soon to destroy or at least to dethrone all kings and abolish all monarchical governments. This, it cannot be disguised, flattered at that time the ruling popular passion of all Europe. It was at first hinted that it was written in Holland; but I have long entertained a suspicion, from many circumstances, that Sir William Jones, who undoubtedly furnished Mr. Franklin with his motto,

"Non sine Diis animosus infans,"

sent him the *Eripuit cœlo*, and that M. Turgot only added the *mox sceptra*. Whoever was the author of it, there can be no doubt it was an imitation of a line in a poem on astronomy, written in the age of Tiberius, though it ought not to be called a plagiarism,

Eripuit Jovi fulmen, viresque tonandi.

The general discontents in Europe have not been produced by any increase of the power of kings, for monarchical authority has been greatly diminished in all parts of Europe during the last century, but by the augmentation of the wealth and power of the aristocracies. The great and general extension of commerce has introduced such inequalities of property, that the class of middling people, that great and excellent portion of society upon whom so much of the liberty and prosperity of nations so greatly depends, is almost lost; and the two orders of rich and poor only remain. By this means kings have fallen more into the power and under the direction of the aristocracies, and the middle classes, upon whom kings chiefly depended for support against the encroachments of the nobles and the rich, have failed. The people find themselves burdened now by the rich, and by the power of the crown now commonly wielded by the rich. And as knowledge and education, ever since the Reformation, have been increasing among the common people, they feel their burdens more sensibly, grow impatient under them, and more desirous of throwing them off. The immense revenues of the church, the crowns, and all the great proprietors of land, the armies and navies must all be paid by the people, who groan and stagger under the weight.

The few who think and see the progress and tendency of things, have long foreseen that resistance in some shape or other must be resorted to, some time or other. They have not been able to see any resource but in the common people; indeed, in republicanism, and that republicanism must be democracy; because the whole power of the aristocracy, as of the monarchies, aided by the church, must be wielded against them. Hence the popularity of all insurrections against the ordinary authority of government during the last century. Hence the popularity of Pascal Paoli, the Polish insurrections, the American Revolution, and the present struggle in Spain and Portugal. When, where, and in what manner all this will end, God only knows. To this cause Mr. Franklin owed much of his popularity. He was considered to be in his heart no friend to kings, nobles, or prelates. He was thought a profound legislator, and a friend of democracy. He was thought to be the magician who had excited the ignorant Americans to resistance. His mysterious wand had separated the Colonies from Great Britain. He had framed and established all the American constitutions of government, especially all the best of them, *i. e.* the most democratical. His plans and his example were to abolish monarchy, aristocracy, and hierarchy throughout the world. Such opinions as these were entertained by the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, M. Turgot, M. Condorcet, and a thousand other men of learning and eminence in France, England, Holland, and all the rest of Europe.

Mr. Franklin, however, after all, and notwithstanding all his faults and errors, was a great and eminent benefactor to his country and mankind.

Such was the real character, and so much more formidable was the artificial character of Dr. Franklin, when he entered into partnership with the Count de Vergennes, the most powerful minister of State in Europe, to destroy the character and power of a poor man almost without a name, unknown in the European world, born and educated in the American wilderness, out of which he had never set his foot till 1778. Thanks to the wisdom, virtue, dignity, and fortitude of congress, all their arts were defeated in America. And thanks to the intelligence, integrity, and firmness of Mr. Jay, they were totally disappointed at Paris. For, without his coöperation, no effectual resistance could have been made, as Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Laurens were not present.

A clamor will no doubt be raised, and a horror excited, because Franklin is dead. To this, at present, I shall say no more than that his letters still live, that his enmity to me is recorded in history, and that I never heard it was unlawful to say that Cæsar was ambitious, Cato proud, Cicero vain, Brutus and Seneca as well as Pompey, usurers; or that the divine Socrates gave advice to a courtesan in her trade, and was even suspected of very infamous vices with Alcibiades and other boys, — because they were dead.

Franklin had a great genius, original, sagacious, and inventive, capable of discoveries in science no less than of improvements in the fine arts and the mechanic arts. He had a vast imagination, equal to the comprehension of the greatest objects, and capable of a steady and cool comprehension of them. He had wit at will. He had humor that, when he pleased, was delicate and delightful. He had a satire that was good-natured or caustic, Horace or Juvenal, Swift or Rabelais, at his pleasure. He had talents for irony, allegory, and fable, that he could adapt with great skill to the promotion of moral and political truth. He was master of that infantine simplicity which the French call *naïveté*, which

never fails to charm, in Phædrus and La Fontaine, from the cradle to the grave. Had he been blessed with the same advantages of scholastic education in his early youth, and pursued a course of studies as unembarrassed with occupations of public and private life, as Sir Isaac Newton, he might have emulated the first philosopher. Although I am not ignorant that most of his positions and hypotheses have been controverted, I cannot but think he has added much to the mass of natural knowledge, and contributed largely to the progress of the human mind, both by his own writings and by the controversies and experiments he has excited in all parts of Europe. He had abilities for investigating statistical questions, and in some parts of his life has written pamphlets and essays upon public topics with great ingenuity and success; but after my acquaintance with him, which commenced in congress in 1775, his excellence as a legislator, a politician, or a negotiator most certainly never appeared. No sentiment more weak and superficial was ever avowed by the most absurd philosopher than some of his, particularly one that he procured to be inserted in the first constitution of Pennsylvania, and for which he had such a fondness as to insert it in his will. I call it weak, for so it must have been, or hypocritical; unless he meant by one satiric touch to ridicule his own republic, or throw it into everlasting contempt.

I must acknowledge, after all, that nothing in life has mortified or grieved me more than the necessity which compelled me to oppose him so often as I have. He was a man with whom I always wished to live in friendship, and for that purpose omitted no demonstration of respect, esteem, and veneration in my power, until I had unequivocal proofs of his hatred, for no other reason under the sun, but because I gave my judgment in opposition to his, in many points which materially affected the interests of our country, and in many more which essentially concerned our happiness, safety, and well-being. I could not and would not sacrifice the clearest dictates of my understanding and the purest principles of morals and policy in compliance to Dr. Franklin. When historians shall hereafter inform posterity that Mr Adams was not beloved by his venerable colleague, it is to be hoped that they will explain this truth by adding, that Mr. Izard, Mr. Lee, Mr. Dana, and many other honest patriots were not beloved by him, and that Mr. Silas Deane and many others of his stamp were beloved by him.

What shall we do with these gentlemen of great souls and vast views, who, without the least tincture of vanity, *bonâ fide* believe themselves the greatest men in the world, fully qualified and clearly entitled to govern their governors and command their commanders as well as their equals and inferiors, purely for their good and without the smallest interest for themselves? Though it may be true, as Dr. Young says, proud as this world is, there is more superiority in it given than assumed, yet it is certain there is sometimes more assumed than the world is willing to give. Such, unfortunately for Dr. Franklin, was his destiny on this occasion. Instead of disapproving my designs in Holland, congress sanctioned them. Instead of disgracing and crushing me, they heaped upon me fresh proofs of their confidence and affection.

C.

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FROM THE BOSTON PATRIOT, 23 OCTOBER, 1811.

When the conferences between the British and American ministers were first opened, or very soon afterwards, the former demanded the cession of the whole Province of Maine. They pretended that it was no part of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, and therefore no part of the American confederacy; consequently, not included in their commission nor in ours; that the boundary between the United States and the British territory in America must be the Piscataqua River, &c.

This wild pretension was unexpected to us all, I believe. I am sure it was to me. I contented myself with observing, that the Province of Maine had been long incorporated by charter with the Old Colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay; that they had all been under one government and administration for a century; that the Province of Maine had been in arms against the pretensions of the British ministry and parliament, as long and as ardently as any part of the Union; had contributed her full proportion both of men and money in the whole course of the war; and that the British commissioner might as well claim the town of Boston or the town of Plymouth, as the town of Falmouth, York, or Wells; for all these had alike been represented in congress from 1774 to the present day, and been equally or at least proportionally concerned in electing and maintaining delegates in that great council of the nation. My colleagues promptly and cordially supported me in all these observations, and the English gentlemen did not appear to possess any information to countervail them; but still insisted that they must have the rivers Penobscot and Kennebec within their dominions. From time to time after this, both in private conversations and in public conferences, the English gentlemen contended for Penobscot, Kennebec, and as far as Piscataqua River. There was so much said upon the subject that it began to be a topic of conversation at Versailles, and I was informed that some of the courtiers had received impressions favorable to the British claim. This induced me to carry to Versailles and show to the Comte de Vergennes, (as I have mentioned in the foregoing journal,) the documents containing the authority of the Governors Shirley, Pownall, Bernard, and Hutchinson, in our favor, and directly in contradiction to the present pretensions of Mr. Oswald, Mr. Whitefoord, Mr. Strachey, &c. This precaution, which I took long before I produced any of these documents in our public conferences, silenced all the praters at Versailles, and we heard no more of British pretensions to Penobscot, countenanced at court. Messengers and couriers were continually passing and repassing between Paris and London, from the British ambassadors to the British ministry. One gentleman I have been informed crossed the Channel eight or ten times upon these errands during the negotiation. And whenever a new courier arrived, we were sure to hear some new proposition concerning the Province of Maine. Sometimes the English gentlemen appeared to soften down a little, and to be willing to compromise with us, and to condescend to agree

upon Kennebec River as the boundary; and at last they seemed to insinuate that for the sake of peace they might retreat as far as Penobscot. But Penobscot must at all events be theirs. We concluded, from all these appearances, that they had instructions to insist upon this point; but we insisted upon the River St. Croix, which I construed to mean the River St. John's, for St. John's had as many holy crosses upon it as any other river in that region, and had as often been called St. Croix River.

One morning, I am not able to say of what day in November, but certainly many days after the commencement of conferences, the British minister introduced to us a special messenger from London, as the oldest clerk in the board of trade and plantations, and a very respectable character. He was sent over by the British cabinet with huge volumes of the original records of the board of trade and plantations, which they would not trust to any other messenger, in order to support their incontestable claim to the Province of Maine. We all treated the gentleman and his records with respect. After the usual ceremonies and salutations were over, the gentleman produced his manuscripts, and pointed to the passages he relied on, and read them.

I said nothing at first; but I thought the British cabinet believed that Dr. Franklin was too much of a philosopher to have been very attentive to these ancient transactions, and that Mr. Adams and Mr. Jay were too young to know any thing about them; and, therefore, that they might, by the venerable figure and imposing title of the most ancient clerk in the board of trade and plantations, and by the pompous appearance of enormous volumes of ancient records, be able to chicane us out of the Province of Maine, or at least to intimidate us into compromise for the River Kennebec, or, at the worst, for Penobscot. When the aged stranger had read for some time in his aged volumes, I observed that I had, at my apartments, documents which I flattered myself would sufficiently explain and refute whatever might be contained in those records, which should be construed or alleged against our right to the Province of Maine, and requested that the deliberation might be postponed till I could produce my books and papers. This was agreed. Accordingly, at the next meeting, I produced my documents.

Here I hope I shall be indulged in a digression, to show what these documents were, and how I became possessed of them.

When in October, 1779, I received from congress my commissions and instructions to treat of peace and commerce with the ministers of his Britannic majesty, and my orders to embark for Europe in order to be there ready to treat whenever negotiations for peace should be opened, I foresaw that there might be much difficulty and discussion in ascertaining the boundary between that part of Massachusetts called the Province of Maine and the British Province of Nova Scotia, and possibly of Canada. To prepare myself against this contingency, I procured the charters of Massachusetts, and a pretty thick quarto volume of the printed negotiations of Mr. Maitland and Governor Shirley in the year 1754, in which many questions, and perhaps all the questions relative to the subject, had been largely treated at Paris. I took some pains to procure another paper, too, which, though it could be of no authority of itself, would serve me as an index to all other authorities. Although the history of this paper will be considered another digression, it must be here inserted.

In the autumn of the year 1773, the two houses of the legislature of Massachusetts appointed the Honorable James Bowdoin and John Adams, Esq., a committee to prepare and report a statement of the title of the province to certain lands to which the legislature of New York had asserted a claim, and endeavored to support it by a very learned work elaborately drawn up by Mr. Duane, and adopted and printed by their authority. When the committee met, Mr. Bowdoin insisted that Mr. Adams should take upon himself the investigation and prepare the report, as he was pleased to say, because it lay more in the course of his studies and daily researches. I was very much pressed with business; Mr. Bowdoin had great leisure. Mr. Bowdoin had been fifteen years in the legislature, and having much more experience and weight, I excused myself and urged him to undertake it, promising to give him all the assistance in my power. But he refused, and at last, with much reluctance, I undertook it.

A much more considerable part of the winter than I could well spare from my necessary engagements in other business, was spent in researches to prepare this report. I visited Dr. Mather, and was kindly admitted to his library and the collections of his ancestors. I was admitted to a valuable collection of Mr. Moffat, who was very curious in amassing ancient records and pamphlets, particularly the journals, ancient and modern, of the Massachusetts legislature. I mounted up to the balcony of Dr. Sewall's church, where were assembled a collection which Mr. Prince had devoted himself to make from the twentieth year of his age. The loss of this library of books and papers, in print and in manuscript, can never be sufficiently regretted. Such a treasure never existed anywhere else, and can never again be made. He had endeavored, and with great success, to collect every history, pamphlet, and paper which could throw light on the Reformation, the rise and progress of the Puritans, and the persecutions which drove our ancestors over to this wild and unknown world.

From the materials, collected from every quarter, I drew a report, and presented it to Mr. Bowdoin, who, after taking time to peruse it, was pleased to say it was an excellent report, that it wanted no amendment, and that he would present it to the House. Mr. Samuel Adams was then clerk of the House. The legislature were convened by Governor Gage, at Salem, and whether the report was ever read to the House or not, I know not. It was not printed in the Journal, as all other reports of that nature ever had been. Expecting to see it in print immediately, I had omitted to preserve a copy of it. This report now, in 1779, I wanted to assist me in preparing documents for the negotiations for peace. But applying to Mr. Adams, who had been clerk of the House, and was now secretary of the State, he informed me that in the confusion at Salem, when they resolved on a congress and chose their delegates, he had mislaid it, and could not find it. It was, however, afterwards found and delivered to the commissioners, who finally settled the dispute with the commissioners of New York. I say it was found, because I have been informed by Governor Sullivan, Chief Justice Parsons, Mr. Dalton, and Mr. King, that they had it in my handwriting, and that it enabled them to obtain from New York the cession of the Genesee country. Where it is now, I know not; but it ought either to be returned to me or published, as I never had any compensation for it, though a grant had always been customary on such occasions, or even acknowledgment of it. This however, is no mortification to me. Another consideration is infinitely more

afflicting, — the prudence of our State in trifling with this immense interest, and selling a principality for a song. That territory would now build hospitals, universities, botanical gardens, or any other public institutions, without applying to individual subscribers, or laying any burden on the people.

As I could not obtain my report in manuscript or in print, I looked about to furnish myself with such other documents as I could find. I procured all the printed Journals of the Massachusetts legislature, which contained any thing relative to our boundaries; and among the rest, the journals of the years 1762, 1763, 1764, 1765, and 1766. In all these journals it appeared that one counsellor or assistant, an inhabitant or proprietor of lands, within the territory lying between the River Sagadahock and Nova Scotia, was annually chosen by the two houses of the legislature of Massachusetts Bay. And this Sagadahock counsellor had never been negatived by any governor, nor was any disapprobation of his election signified by the government in England. On the contrary, the express approbation of the governor had been annually recorded.

It appeared in all these journals that representatives from the towns in the counties of York, Cumberland, Lincoln, all within the Province of Maine, had been annually chosen, and several in the House, without any remonstrance from any governor, or from the government in England. In short, the legislature of Massachusetts Bay had laid out counties, incorporated towns, granted lands, and regulated every thing from the date of the charter in the Province of Maine, as much as in the Old Colony of Plymouth, or in the Counties of Worcester and Hampshire.

[Here follow references to the volumes of the Journal, and to the report of Mr. Hutchinson of the title to the territory in question, in 1763, which it is unnecessary to repeat here, the printed volumes being readily accessible to the curious. There is also a break in the article, as printed in the Boston Patriot, caused by the accidental loss of a part of the manuscript.]

In addition to these, I had another journal, in which was recorded the voyage of Governor Pownall to Penobscot, his treaty with the Indians there, and his solemnly taking possession of the river and the country on both sides of it in the name and by the authority of the Province of Massachusetts Bay. This volume has been borrowed or mislaid, or something worse; so that I have it not in my power to give it in all its details.

These volumes, *i. e.* Shirley's and Maitland's memorials, the Journals of the House of Representatives, and the charter and laws of Massachusetts Bay had run all hazards with me in a leaky ship, every hour, for fifteen days, in danger of sinking, and through Spain and France to Holland, and thence back to Paris. When they were produced and laid on the table before the British minister and his associates, I saw no great symptoms of surprise in any of them, excepting the tall and venerable clerk of the Board of Trade. His countenance and the agitation he was in convinced me that he knew the contents of those volumes as well or better than I did. It was impossible but he must have been familiar with them all. It was manifest enough that the Comte de Vergennes was not the only refined politician with whom we had to do.

When the gentleman had read from his ancient records all that he thought proper to read of misrepresentations of Coram and his associates against the Massachusetts Bay, requesting the gentlemen to peruse my other volumes at

leisure, I read the foregoing report; and before I had gone half-way through, I saw that all the gentlemen, not excluding the clerk himself, were fully convinced that they had taken possession of ground they could not maintain or defend. Although they did not expressly acknowledge their error, the subject subsided and we heard little more concerning it. The clerk, with his records, soon returned to England.

D.

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FROM THE BOSTON PATRIOT, 21 AUGUST, 1811.

THE reflections suggested by this letter are more numerous than your patience would bear to publish. A very few will be noted: —

1. This letter is a masterpiece of — what shall I call it? — French finesse? It is very true that we have experienced in most of the British administrations since the year 1761, and especially within the last ten years, models of equal excellence. The refinements of policy in many of the courtiers in the old world can scarcely be conceived by the plain genius of native Americans, nor can they be perceived without abhorrence of the heart. Our government and its servants must be upon their guard, and see and judge for themselves, placing unlimited confidence in no pretended friends. Hitherto foreign policy has obtained no essential advantage against us, except by discouraging our navy, and in that finesse France and England most cordially unite. Russia, I hope, will give us better advice.

2. What impression this letter made upon Dr. Franklin, I know not, but by conjecture. His usual reserve and taciturnity did not forsake him. At least, it made no alteration in his confidence in Vergennes. He persisted to the last, even long after the signature of the definitive treaty, in saying that "the Count de Vergennes had never deceived him." This favorite saying of the Doctor is wholly incomprehensible to me. Did he mean that Vergennes had from the beginning communicated candidly to him his design to deprive us, with or without our own consent, of the fisheries and western territories? If this was his meaning, where was his integrity and fidelity to his country in concealing it from congress and his colleagues? Did he mean that Marbois's letter had not convinced him that Vergennes was in combination with Marbois to deprive us of the fisheries and western territories? If this was his meaning, he had more credulity in politics than he had in philosophy, morality, or religion.

Mr. Jay's opinion of Marbois's letter was uniform, unreserved, and explicit. That of a downright honest man and a man of sound understanding.

3. This letter made perhaps a greater impression upon me than upon either of my colleagues, because I had been a witness to certain facts of which they knew nothing. With all my reputed vanity, it is a severe mortification to me to find myself obliged to enter into so much egotistical history, and to relate so

many facts as I have done and shall be obliged to do, upon my own single testimony. I can only appeal to God and to the world, and leave it to their ultimate decision. At present, I can give but hints and sketches, and I shall certainly not live long enough to publish the documents which are in my possession, much less to collect those which I know exist, though I have them not.

On my arrival in France, in the month of April, 1778, as it has been before related perhaps more than once, I found the Americans divided into two parties, very nearly as hostile to each other as France and Great Britain are at this hour. Dr. Franklin and Mr. Deane had been at the head of one party, and Mr. Arthur Lee and Mr. Ralph Izard at the head of the other. Mr. Deane had been recalled, and was gone to Toulon to embark in the French fleet for America. I was arrived with a new commission, to Mr. Franklin, Mr. Lee, and myself, as commissioners plenipotentiary to the King of France. Both parties, therefore, looked to me as an umpire, because it would be in my power to decide which party should have the majority. In a country whose language, laws, customs, manners, and every thing was new to me, situated between gentlemen in American employments, one of whom, Dr. Franklin, was known to me, the other two, Mr. Arthur Lee and Mr. Ralph Izard, were total strangers to me but by reputation, I saw and felt the delicacy, the difficulty, the danger, and the full responsibility of my situation.

Dr. Franklin was the first I saw, and he received me like a cordial congress acquaintance of three years' standing. He had reserved Mr. Deane's apartments in the house, and I agreed to take them, and make a common family with the Doctor. He immediately informed me of the "coolness," as he called it, between him, on one side, and Mr. Lee and Mr. Izard on the other, and gave me such an account of the causes of it as he thought proper. I soon saw Mr. Lee, but he was very reserved on the subject of "coolness" and differences. Mr. Izard soon made me repeated visits, and gave me in full details his account of the dissensions and quarrels among American ministers. This is not the place to unravel all these mysteries, which would fill a volume. It must suffice to say that Mr. Izard, with a fund of honor, integrity, candor, and benevolence in his character, which must render him eternally estimable in the sight of all moral and social beings, was, nevertheless, the most passionate, and in his passions the most violent and unbridled in his expressions, of any man I ever knew. Mr. Izard's history of transactions before my arrival shocked me beyond measure, and his expressions terrified me. I knew not what to think of the man or his narrative. As to enter into particulars would lead me too far out of my way, I must confine myself at present to the point immediately before me, relative to M. Marbois's letter.

Mr. Ralph Izard was the first person (and that in the month of April, 1778,) who suggested to me a suspicion that the Comte de Vergennes had formed a design to deprive America of the fisheries and to monopolize the greatest part of them to France. In proof of his suspicion, he quoted an article relative to the fisheries in our treaty with France of the 6th of February, 1778, in which an "exclusive right" had been stipulated to France, in certain important portions of the fishing-grounds. As I have not time to quote the article at large, I must refer to the treaty. I had been so short a time at Passy, and had so many new scenes and employments, that I am not sure that I had read the treaty. If I

had, it was not with that attention that enabled me to recollect the expressions in it. In truth, I thought Mr. Izard had been heated by controversies, and I gave little or no credit to his insinuations. Mr. Izard, however, did not leave me long in this state of pyrrhonism. I met him so often at his house and mine, and we met so often at dinners and suppers upon invitations at other places, where he never failed to introduce this subject, that I was compelled to look in earnest into the treaty, and compare it with his documents. He had written to England and obtained copies from the public offices of a correspondence between the British and French ministers, in the negotiation of the peace of 1763, relative to this French claim of an "exclusive right." These papers were produced to me, and I examined and compared them with attention. I then saw there was room for suspicion; but still hoped that the Court of France had not seriously meditated any plan to deprive us of any claim to the fisheries. These papers were transmitted to congress at the time by Mr. Lee and Mr. Izard, and now remain upon the files. I have no copies of them, and if I had, they would be too long to be here inserted. Although I had always been apprehensive that at any future negotiation for peace Great Britain would play off all her policy to deprive us of our right to any share in the fisheries, I had not hitherto entertained or conceived any jealousy that France would endeavor to exclude us, or that she would join with Great Britain in any such design. Mr. Izard and Mr. Lee, however, together with many hints and circumstances that occurred during my first residence in France, at length fastened upon me a suspicion, that whoever should be destined to confer about peace, would have to contend with all the arts and intrigues both of France and England. As Mr. Jay was in congress, as I presume, when Mr. Izard and Mr. Lee transmitted the papers before mentioned to that assembly, it is probable that he had conceived the same jealousy.

Full of these apprehensions, I embarked at Lorient on the 17th of June, 1779, in the French frigate The Sensible, in company with the Chevalier de la Luzerne, the new ambassador from the King of France to congress, and the secretary of his legation, M. Marbois, and their suite, Mr. Otto, Mr. Laforest, and others. We arrived in Boston harbor on the 3d of August. During the whole course of this voyage, I made it my business to converse with these gentlemen with the utmost frankness and candor upon every subject which could be interesting to their country and mine in their novel connection. They appeared to be vastly pleased with my freedom and familiarity, and were not less inquisitive than I was communicative. The minister could not speak or understand one word of English. I was awkward enough in French, but he was very inquisitive in his own language, and I answered him as well as I could. The secretary understood English very well, and could speak it about as well as I could speak French. We therefore found no difficulty in conversing upon any subject.

The fisheries lying with great weight on my mind, I took every opportunity of conversing upon that subject both with the minister and the secretary. I mentioned nothing of the treaty, or of the doubts of Mr. Izard and Mr. Lee, or of my own, concerning the designs of France; but represented the probability that England, at the peace, whenever it should arrive, would probably exert all her art to deprive us of any share in that great source of wealth, that great instrument of commerce, that great nursery of seamen, that great means of

power. I represented to them that France ought to support our claim to a share in it, if it were only to prevent England from commanding a monopoly of it; that our right to it was at least as clear and indisputable as that of England or France; that it was situated in the ocean, which was open and free and common to all nations, to us as much as to any other; that its proximity to our country seemed naturally to give us a right preferable to any European claim; but that we asked no preference, but acknowledged the right of all nations to the ocean and its inhabitants; that we were in possession, and had been so from the first settlement of our country; we had carried on the fisheries from the beginning; and that Great Britain was more indebted to our ancestors for the flourishing state of the fisheries, both of cod and whales, than to all the inhabitants of the three kingdoms; that the fisheries were an essential link in the chain of American commerce, which was one connected system; that they were more particularly indispensable to New England; that our remittances to France or England could not be made without our commerce in fish with Spain, Portugal, and Italy, as well as all the West India Islands.

I know not how many conversations I had upon this subject with those gentlemen, but I believe not less than twenty, for they both appeared as eager to talk of it as I was. The minister, though he heard me with patience and attention and complaisance, was reserved in expressing his opinion, though I understood him to nod assent to all that I had said. But the secretary, this very M. Barbé Marbois, was as frank and open as I was. He declared to me, in the most clear and positive terms, on several occasions, that I had convinced him that "we had a natural, a legal, and a possessing right to the fisheries; that they were necessary and essential to our interests; and that France ought to support us in our claim to a full and free enjoyment of them."

After our arrival in America, when I heard that these gentlemen had recommended to congress so much moderation in their instructions to their minister for peace, and had advised not to insist on the fisheries and western territories as ultimata, and when, afterwards, I found by our instructions and by my private correspondents that they had advised an explicit renunciation of any claim to the fisheries and western lands, I knew not how to reconcile these things with our conversations on board The Sensible. But when I saw this letter of M. Marbois and compared it with all my former conversations with Mr. Izard and Mr. Lee, with all that I had heard in America, and all I had experienced in France and Holland, with all our instructions from congress, and especially with our conversations on board the ship, with one especially, which we had whilst sailing over the grand bank of Newfoundland, in which M. Marbois, in the presence of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, had been as explicit as words could express, in acknowledging his entire conviction of our right, and of our interest and duty to insist upon it, and of the duty and interest of France to support us in it, what could be my reflections? Was M. Marbois a consummate hypocrite? Had he deliberately laid a plan to deceive me, on shipboard, by the most solemn asseverations of wilful falsehoods, lest I should put my friends in congress upon their guard against his wiles after he should arrive at Philadelphia? This I could scarcely believe, for I had conceived an esteem for his character. I endeavored to account for this contradictory conduct upon two hypotheses. One was, that the Chevalier had received from the Comte de Vergennes, and then possessed in his

portfolio instructions to oppose our claims to the fisheries and western lands, which instructions he had not communicated to M. Marbois. The other was that the minister and secretary had received such instructions from the Count de Vergennes after their arrival at Philadelphia. In either of these cases M. Marbois might think it his duty to obey his instructions, though it were by promoting measures in contradiction to his own private opinion of the right and the policy. One or the other of these suppositions I am still inclined to believe was the fact.

4. It is not credible that M. Marbois would have dared to write such a letter to the Comte de Vergennes, if he had not been previously instructed by that minister to promote the system developed in it. We may then fairly impute that system to the Comte.

5. That system appears to have been, 1. To persuade congress to instruct the ministers at the negotiations for peace explicitly to renounce all claim to the fisheries and western lands, and formally to acknowledge that they had no right to either. 2. If they could not carry the first point, then to persuade congress to resolve that they would not insist upon the fisheries or western lands as conditions *sine quibus non* of peace. They failed in the first point, but prevailed in the second. 3. Congress appear to have been reproached by their own consciences with a reflection that they had gone too far in their complaisance to their allies, and soon came to another resolution, that the right to the fisheries should in no case be expressly given up. This resolution had a spice of spirit and independence in it, and accordingly gave great offence to M. Marbois.

6. However confident M. Marbois might have been that the country and their congress were so equally divided that "our influence," as he expresses it, could turn the scale in favor of peace or war, he did not find that influence sufficient at last to deprive America of her fisheries or western territories.

7. I cannot dismiss this letter of M. Marbois without observing that his philippic against Mr. Samuel Adams is a jewel in the crown of that patriot and hero almost as brilliant as his exception from pardon in General Gage's proclamation. The talents and virtues of that great man were of the most exalted, though not of the most showy kind. His love of his country, his exertions in her service through a long course of years, through the administrations of the Governors Shirley, Pownall, Bernard, Hutchinson, and Gage, under the royal government, and through the whole of the subsequent Revolution, and always in support of the same principles, his inflexible integrity, his disinterestedness, his invariable resolution, his sagacity, his patience, perseverance, and pure public virtue were never exceeded by any man in America. Although he was carried away with the general enthusiasm of all parties in America in admiration of the French revolution, which I never approved for a single instant; although his ideas of a form of government necessary for the establishment of liberty were not always, nor, indeed, ever conformable to mine; and although he might have been seduced, by designing men, in his extreme old age, and his almost total retirement from the world, to injure me personally, I never can cease to esteem and admire his character or to love his memory. No man in America ever merited statues in honor of his memory more than this, unless we except his great friend and colleague, the Honorable James Otis, Junior. A collection of his writings would be as curious as voluminous. It would throw light upon

American history for fifty years. In it would be found specimens of a nervous simplicity of reasoning and eloquence that have never been rivalled in America.

8. We transmitted this letter to congress, where it made a less sensation, because there was little in it new to the members of that body. They knew that the French minister and secretary had labored to persuade them to adopt the same sentiments; but I believe the letter was not soon published. It was whispered about and came to the ears of M. Marbois, though I have reason to think he never got a sight of it. My reason is this. In 1785 or 1786, when I resided in England, Dr. Edward Bancroft made me a visit, and informed me that he came from America in the same ship with Marbois, when he returned to Europe after the peace. That M. Marbois introduced a conversation with him upon the subject of this letter, said there had been a noise made about a letter of his pretended to have been intercepted; but he never could get a sight of it, and could not imagine what letter it could be. He asked Bancroft if he had ever seen it. The answer was in the affirmative. "Do you remember enough of it to know it again, if you should hear it read?" "Yes." Upon this M. Marbois produced his letter-book and read passages in a number of letters. "Are any of these the letters you have seen?" "No." He then read more. "Are any of these the right ones?" "No." At last he read some passages in another, when Bancroft said, "That is the one." They then went through the whole letter. Whether Bancroft had a copy of it in writing in English, I am not positive; but he had a distinct remembrance of it in his head, and compared it carefully from the beginning to the end, and pronounced it to be the same letter faithfully translated, except in one expression, of no consequence to the sense. Marbois exclaimed, "How the devil could they get at my cipher? I sent it only in cipher. I thought myself perfectly sure of my cipher. Well. I shall deny it. No mortal has any right to know any thing about my correspondence with my government."

Dr. Bancroft said he thought it his duty to communicate this conversation to me, that in case any controversy should ever arise concerning the authenticity of the letter, this fact might be produced in confirmation of it. There has not, however, arisen any such controversy. The members of congress, of all parties, were satisfied that it was no fabrication; and there has been but one mind in the world concerning it wherever it has been known. It must be here added that the whole of this system of the Comte de Vergennes has been, since the French revolution, revealed to the world in the *Politique des Cabinets*, which shows that the Comte had meditated and planned his whole scheme long before our treaty with France in February, 1778.

Notwithstanding this letter, Dr. Franklin still persisted in his resolution to communicate all our conferences with the British minister concerning the fisheries and western lands to the Comte de Vergennes. Mr. Jay and Mr. Adams thought this would be to commit the lamb to the custody of the wolf. When Mr. Franklin found Adams and Jay perfectly united, and that they would proceed without him, he turned short about, and agreed to go on with them.

E.

(Page 394.)

EXTRACTS FROM THE "MONITEUR UNIVERSEL." NO. 358. DIMANCHE, DÉCEMBRE 23, 1792.

Séance du Vendredi, 21, (1792.)

Un secrétaire fait lecture d'une lettre du Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, ainsi conçue.

"CITOYEN PRÉSIDENT, — Les preuves de talent et de civisme qu'a données le Citoyen Genet dans les différentes missions dont il a été chargé, ont déterminé le conseil exécutif à récompenser son zèle, en le nommant Ministre plénipotentiaire auprès les États Unis d'Amérique. Il doit travailler à resserrer les liens qui unissaient les deux nations; objet négligé par l'ancien gouvernement.

"Le conseil exécutif s'est fait représenter les instructions données par le Ministre précédent, aux agens dans ce pays. Il y a vu avec indignation que, dans le tems même où ce bon peuple nous exprimait de la manière la plus touchante son amitié et sa reconnoissance, Vergennes et Montmorin pensaient qu'il ne convenait point à la France de lui donner toute la consistance dont il était susceptible; parce qu'il acquerrait une force, dont il serait probablement tenté d'abuser.

"Ils enjoignèrent en conséquence à leurs agens, de tenir à l'égard de ce peuple la conduite la plus passive, et de ne parler que des vœux personnels du roi pour sa prospérité. La même Machiavélisme avait dirigé les opérations de la guerre: la même duplicité fut employée dans les négociations pour la paix; et lorsqu'elle fut signée, ce peuple, pour lequel on avait pris les armes, fut entièrement négligé.

"La Convention Nationale veut suivre une autre marche. Déjà elle a manifesté le désir de contracter une alliance solide avec les Américains. C'est ce qui m'engage à lui rappeler, qu'elle s'est engagée à exprimer elle-même (par une lettre, que son Président a été chargé d'écrire) sa sensibilité sur les secours généreux que les États Unis (et surtout celui de Pennsylvanie) ont donnés aux Colonies Françaises. Je pense que si le Citoyen Genet étoit porteur de cette lettre, elle pourroit produire un très bon effet et faciliter les succès de ses négociations.

"Chule (Député) demande que des Commissaires pris dans le sein de la Convention soient envoyés près des États Unis. Cette proposition n'a pas de suite.

"L'Assemblée décide que l'adresse votée au peuple des États Unis sera lue dans la séance de demain, pour être remise au Citoyen Genet."

Séance de Samedi, 22 Décembre.

Gaudet lit l'addresse que la Convention l'avoit chargé de faire aux États Unis d'Amérique. La rédaction en est adoptée, ainsi qu'elle suit.

PRÉSIDENT DES ÉTATS UNIS DU NORD, — Au milieu des orages qui agitent notre liberté naissante, il est doux pour la République Française de pouvoir communiquer avec des Républiques fondées sur les mêmes principes que les

siens. Nos frères des États Unis auront appris, sans doute avec joie, la révolution nouvelle qui a renversé le dernier obstacle à notre liberté. Cette révolution était nécessaire. La royauté existait encore; et dans toute Constitution où la royauté existe, il n'est point de vraie liberté. Les rois et l'égalité ne peuvent se rencontrer ensemble; leur état est de conspirer contre elle, et contre la souveraineté des peuples. Les États Unis de l'Amérique auront peine à le croire; l'appui que l'ancienne Cour de France leur prêta pour recouvrer leur indépendance n'étoit que le fruit d'une vile spéculation; leur gloire offusquait ses vues ambitieuses; et ses ambassadeurs avaient l'ordre criminel d'arrêter le cours de leur prospérité.

Non, ce n'est qu'entre des nations libres que des traités sincères et fraternels peuvent se former. La liberté que la République Française veut rendre aux peuples qui réclament son appui, ne sera point souillée des semblables taches; elle est pure comme elle.

F.

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[Commencement of the letter to Mr. Livingston, as first drawn up by Mr. Jay, but concluded to be left out: —]

Sir, — We have had the honor of receiving, by Captain Barney, your two letters of the 21st and 25th of April last, with the papers referred to in them.

We are happy to find that the provisional articles have been approved and ratified by congress, and we regret that the manner in which that business was conducted, does not coincide with your ideas of propriety.

Your doubts on that head appear to have arisen from the following circumstances: —

1. That we entertained and were influenced by distrusts and suspicions which do not seem to you to have been altogether well founded.

2. That we signed the articles without previously communicating them to this court.

3. That we consented to a separate article which you consider as not being very important in itself, and as offensive to Spain.

4. That we kept and still keep that article a secret.

With respect to the first, your doubts appear to us somewhat singular. In our negotiation with the British commissioner it was essential to insist on and, if possible, to obtain his consent to four important concessions, namely: —

1. That Britain should treat with us as being what we were, namely, an independent people.

The French minister thought this demand premature, and that it ought to arise from, and not precede the treaty.

2. That Britain should agree to the extent of boundary we claimed.

The French minister thought the demand extravagant in itself, and as militating against certain views of Spain which he was disposed to favor.

3. That Britain should admit our right in common to the fishery.

The French minister thought this demand too extensive.

4. That Britain should not insist on our reinstating the Tories.

The French minister argued that they ought to be reinstated.

Was it unnatural for us, Sir, to conclude from these facts that the French minister was opposed to our succeeding on these four great points, in the extent we wished? To us it appeared evident that his plan of a treaty for us, was far from being such an one as America would have preferred; and as we disapproved of his model, we thought it imprudent to give him an opportunity of moulding our treaty by it.

Whether the minister was influenced by what he really thought would be best for France, is a question which, however easy or however difficult to decide, is not very important to the point under consideration. Whatever his motives may have been, certain it is that they were such as militated against our system; and, as in private life it is deemed imprudent to admit opponents to full confidence, so in public affairs the like caution seems equally proper.

But, admitting the force of this reasoning, why, when the articles were completed, did we not communicate them to the French minister before we proceeded to sign them? For the following reasons, Sir.

As Lord Shelburne had excited expectations of his being able to put a speedy termination to the war, it became necessary for him either to realize those expectations or to quit his place. The parliament having met while his negotiations with us were pending, he found it expedient to adjourn it for a short term, in hopes of then meeting it with all the advantage which he might naturally expect from a favorable issue of the negotiation. Hence it was his interest to draw it to a close before that adjournment expired; and to obtain that end, both he and his commissioners prevailed upon themselves to yield certain points on which they would probably have been otherwise more tenacious. Nay, we have and then had good reason to believe that the latitude allowed by the British cabinet for the exercise of discretion was exceeded on that occasion.

You need not be reminded, Sir, that the King of Great Britain had pledged himself in Mr. Oswald's commission to confirm and ratify not what Mr. Oswald should verbally agree to, but what he should formally sign his name and affix his seal to.

Had we communicated the articles, when ready for signing, to the French minister, he doubtless would have complimented us on the terms of them; but at the same time he would have insisted on our postponing the signature of them until the articles then preparing between France, Spain, and Britain should also be ready for signing, he having often intimated to us that we should all sign at the same time and place.

This would have exposed us to a disagreeable dilemma.

Had we agreed to postpone signing the articles, the British cabinet might, and probably would, have taken advantage of it. They might have insisted that as the articles were *res infectæ*, and as they had not authorized Mr. Oswald to accede to certain matters inserted in them, they did not conceive themselves bound in honor or justice to adopt Mr. Oswald's opinions, or permit him to sign and seal, as their commissioner, a number of articles which they did not approve. The whole business would thereby have been set afloat again, and the minister

of France would have had an opportunity, at least, of approving the objections of the British cabinet, and of advising us to recede from demands, which in his opinion were immoderate, and some of which were too inconsistent with the views and claims of Spain to meet with his concurrence.

If, on the other hand, we had refused to postpone the signing, and supposing that no other ill consequence would have resulted, yet certainly such refusal would have been more offensive to the French minister than our doing it without his knowledge, and, consequently, without his opposition. Our withholding from him the knowledge of these articles until after they were signed, was no breach of our treaty with France, and therefore could not afford her any ground of complaint against the United States. It was, indeed, a departure from the line of conduct prescribed by our instructions, but we apprehend that congress marked out that line for their own sake, and not for the sake of France. They directed us to ask and be directed by the advice of the French minister, because they supposed it would be for the interest of America to receive and be governed by it. It was a favor she asked from France, and not a favor that she promised to and we withheld from France. Congress, therefore, alone have a right to complain of that departure. As to the confidence which ought to subsist between allies, we have only to remark that as the French minister did not think proper to consult us about his articles, our giving him as little trouble about ours was perfectly equal and reciprocal.

[Benj. Franklin's observations on Mr. Jay's draft of a letter to Mr. Livingston, which occasioned the foregoing part to be left out.]

Mr. Franklin submits it to the consideration of Mr. Jay, whether it may not be advisable to forbear, at present, the justification of ourselves respecting the signature of the preliminaries, because

That matter is at present quiet here.

No letter sent to the congress is ever kept secret.

The justification contains some charges of unfavorable disposition in the ministers here towards us, that will give offence and will be denied.

Our situation is still critical with respect to the two nations, and the most perfect good understanding should be maintained with this.

The congress do not call upon us for an account of our conduct or its justification. They have not, by any resolution, blamed us. What censure we have received, is only the private opinion of Mr. L.

Mr. Laurens is not here, who is concerned with us.

Will it be attended with any inconvenience, if that part of the letter which relates to the signature, be reserved to a future occasion?

[Mr. Laurens's commencement of the letter to Mr. Livingston, of ———.]

Sir, — By Captain Barney, of The Washington, we have received the honor of your several letters of ——— together with the papers referred to.

While we rejoice upon learning the provisional articles were so acceptable and satisfactory to congress and to our fellow-citizens in general as to entitle them to an immediate ratification, we cannot but regret that our manner of proceeding in that negotiation should have subjected us to an implied censure. Having already assigned reasons for our conduct, we shall not enlarge upon the present occasion. Should congress be pleased hereafter to question us, we trust we shall render such an account of our motives respecting all the articles, general and separate, as will acquit us in the judgment of our country, under which we must stand or fall. Spain, having acceded to the line drawn in article for dividing Floridas from the United States, there can be no doubt she will readily avail herself of the separate article, should congress think proper to make the tender.

We perfectly concur with you, Sir, in opinion, that "honesty is the best policy." Had it appeared to us that another party were guided in their proceedings by this simple maxim, we should not have been driven into a measure as essential to the true interest of our country as it was necessary for defeating a scheme evidently calculated to militate against that interest. We have, indeed, hazarded our own tranquillity by departing from a rigid observance of an injunction, and though we confess ourselves amenable to congress, we have the consolation of knowing that we have done nothing dishonest, nothing detrimental to the just rights of our ally, or to those of any other nation, nothing inconsistent with that true policy which we trust will bear the test of strict inquiry, even at the courts of France and Spain. We do not mean by any thing we have written to impeach the friendship of the king and nation towards the United States, but we may be allowed to suggest that the minister at this court is so far our friend, and so far disposed to promote our happiness and interest as may correspond with his system of policy for extending the power, riches, and glory of France. God forbid we should ever sacrifice our faith, our honor and gratitude. At the same time it is our duty to support the dignity and independent spirit which should characterize a free and generous people, and since it has pleased God in his Providence to place us in the political system of the world, we should modestly endeavor to move like a primary planet, not least, though last created.

G.

(Page 523.)

The following convention is printed exactly from the original copy, with all the signatures attached: —

Nous, D. Joseph del Pozo y Sucre, et D. Manuel Joseph de Salas, commissaires de la junta des députés des villes et provinces de l'Amérique Méridionale, réunie le huit Octobre, mille sept cent quatre-vingt-dix-sept, dans la ville de Madrid en Espagne, pour préparer par les mesures les plus efficaces, l'Indépendance des Colonies Hispano-Américaines, envoyés en France auprès de nos

compatriotes Don Francisco de Miranda, Ancien Général d'armée et notre principal agent, et Don Pablo de Olavide, Ancien Assistant de Séville, tous deux également nommés commissaires par la dite junta, non seulement à l'effet de délibérer ensemble sur l'état des négociations antérieures, faites avec l'Angleterre à différentes époques en faveur de notre indépendance absolue, et principalement sur l'état de celles entamées à Londres depuis mille sept cent quatre-vingt-dix, avec le Ministère Anglais, en vertu des conférences de Hollwood, lesquelles ont réunies les suffrages des Provinces qui en ont eu connaissance, mais encore de donner suite aux dites négociations, en ouvrant la voie à une stipulation solennelle, qui puisse amener ce résultat conformément à l'intérêt et à la volonté des peuples qui, opprimés par le joug Espagnol, habitent le Continent Américain du Sud: Nous D. Joseph del Pozo y Sucre, D. Manuel Joseph de Salas, et D. Francisco de Miranda, nous sommes réunis à Paris le deux Décembre, mille sept cent quatre-vingt-dix-sept, et après une vérification préalable de nos pouvoirs respectifs, avons procédé à ce qui suit.

Considérant que Don Pablo de Olavide ne s'est pas rendu à l'invitation que nous lui avons envoyée à son domicile près D'Orléans;

Considérant encore, qu'un laps de temps assez long s'est écoulé sans avoir reçu de réponse à cette invitation;

Considérant d'ailleurs, que l'état précaire de sa santé, joint à l'existence du régime révolutionnaire en France, le mettent probablement dans l'impossibilité de prendre une part active à nos délibérations;

Considérant enfin que les circonstances actuelles sont tellement pressantes qu'elles ne comportent plus le moindre délai: Nous soussignés, Commissaires, avons jugé nécessaire pour l'intérêt de notre patrie, de passer outre, et sommes solennellement convenus des articles suivants: —

1. Les Colonies Hispano-Américaines ayant unanimement résolu de proclamer leur indépendance et d'asseoir leur liberté sur des bases inébranlables, s'adresseront avec confiance à la Grande Brétagne avec l'invitation de les soutenir dans une entreprise aussi juste qu'honorable. En effet, si dans un état de paix et sans une provocation préalable, la France et l'Espagne ont favorisé et proclamé l'indépendance des Anglo-Américains, dont l'oppression, à coup sûr, n'était pas aussi honteuse que l'est celle des Colonies Espagnoles, l'Angleterre ne balancera pas à concourir à l'indépendance des Colonies de l'Amérique Méridionale, aujourd'hui quelle est engagée dans une guerre des plus violentes de la part de l'Espagne et de la France, laquelle tout en reconnaissant la souveraineté et la liberté des peuples, ne rougit pas de consacrer par l'article du traité d'alliance offensive et défensive avec l'Espagne, l'esclavage le plus absolu de près de quatorze millions d'habitans et de leur postérité; et cela avec un esprit d'exclusion d'autant plus odieux, qu'elle affecte de proclamer à l'égard de tous les autres peuples de la terre, le droit incontestable de se donner telle forme de gouvernement que bon leur semblerait.

2. Un traité d'alliance tel que celui que S. M. T. C. offrit aux États Unis de l'Amérique doit servir de modèle pour cimenter cette importante transaction, avec la différence cependant, qu'on y stipulera en faveur de l'Angleterre des conditions plus avantageuses, plus justes, et plus honorables encore. D'une part la Grande Brétagne s'engagerait à fournir à l'Amérique Méridionale une force maritime et une force terrestre, à l'effet de favoriser l'établissement de son

indépendance sans l'exposer à de fortes convulsions politiques. De l'autre, l'Amérique s'obligerait à payer à son alliée, l'Angleterre, une somme considérable en numéraire, non seulement pour l'indemniser des dépenses qu'elle aurait faites à l'occasion des secours prêtés jusqu'à la conclusion de la guerre, mais encore pour lui servir à liquider aussi une partie considérable de sa dette nationale. Pour acquitter en quelque sorte le bienfait reçû par l'établissement de la liberté, l'Amérique Méridionale lui accorderait dans cet instant la somme de ——— millions de livres sterlings.

3. Les forces maritimes demandées à l'Angleterre n'excéderont pas vingt vaisseaux de ligne. A l'égard des troupes de terre, huit mille hommes d'infanterie et deux mille de cavalerie suffiraient. Dans l'alliance défensive, qu'on établirait par la suite, on y stipulerait que, des secours maritimes, des troupes de terre n'étant point nécessaires, dans cette hypothèse, l'Amérique payerait son contingent par une somme en numéraire qui représenterait l'équivalent.

4. Une alliance défensive formée entre l'Angleterre, les États Unis d'Amérique et l'Amérique Méridionale, est tellement commandée par la nature des choses, par la situation géographique de chacun des trois pays, par les produits, l'industrie, par les besoins, les mœurs, et le caractère de ces trois nations, qu'il est impossible que cette alliance ne soit pas de longue durée, surtout si on prend besoin de la consolider par l'analogie dans la forme politique des trois gouvernements; c'est à dire, par la jouissance d'une liberté civile, sagement entendue, sagement organisée; on pourrait même dire avec confiance, que c'est le seul espoir qui reste à la liberté, audacieusement outragée par les maximes détestables avouées par la République française; c'est le seul moyen encore de former une balance de pouvoir capable de contenir l'ambition destructive et dévastatrice du système français.

5. Il sera établi avec l'Angleterre un traité de Commerce conçu dans les termes les plus avantageux à la nation britannique; en écartant cependant toute idée de monopole, ce traité lui garantira, naturellement et d'une manière certaine, la consommation de la plus grande partie de ses manufactures; car il existe une population de près de quatorze millions d'habitans qui s'habillent de manufactures étrangères et qui consomment une infinité d'articles de luxe Européen. Le commerce d'Angleterre tirerait encore des avantages considérables des fruits précieux et des produits immenses de l'Amérique Méridionale, en répandant ces denrées, par le moyen de ses capitaux et de ses établissements, sur les autres parties du monde. Les bases de ce traité seraient telles que l'entrée d'aucune denrée manufacturée ne serait prohibée.

6. Le passage ou navigation de l'Isthme de Panama qui incessament doit être rendu practicable, ainsi que la navigation du lac de Nicaragua, qui sera de même et tout de suite ouverte pour la communication prompte et facile de la mer du Sud avec l'océan Atlantique, étant encore pour l'Angleterre des objets du plus haut intérêt, l'Amérique Méridionale lui garantirait pour un certain nombre d'années la navigation de l'un et de l'autre passage à des conditions qui, pour être plus favorables, ne seraient cependant point exclusives.

7. Dans les circonstances actuelles on n'établira pas de traité de commerce avec les alliés de l'Amérique Méridionale, attendu que, les droits d'importation et d'exportation devant être établis pour l'intérêt commun de tous les peuples composant les Colonies de l'Amérique Méridionale, et notamment les contrées

connues sous le nom de Vice Royautés du Mexique, Santa Fé, Lima et Rio de La Plata, Provinces de Caracas, Quito, Chili, &c., il faudra, quand l'impulsion sera donnée à l'Amérique Méridionale, attendre la réunion des députés de ces différentes contrées en corps représentatif, pour pouvoir, à cet égard, prendre des arrangements définitifs et d'ensemble. Ceux qui existent maintenant continueront à subsister sur le même pied, tant à l'égard des nations, qu'à l'égard de toutes les puissances amies.

8. Les relations intimes d'association que la banque de Londres serait à même de former dans la suite avec celle de Lima et du Mexique, à l'effet de se soutenir mutuellement, ne seraient point un des moindres avantages que l'indépendance et l'alliance de l'Amérique Méridionale offriraient encore à la Grande Bretagne. Par ce moyen le crédit monétaire de l'Angleterre serait assis sur des bases inébranlables.

9. Les États Unis d'Amérique pourraient être invités à accéder à un traité d'amitié et d'alliance.

On leur garantirait la possession des deux Florides, celle même de la Louisiane, le Mississipi étant à tous égards la meilleure et la plus solide barrière qu'on puisse établir entre les deux grandes nations qui occupent le continent Américain. En échange, les États Unis fourniraient à leurs dépens à l'Amérique Méridionale un corps auxiliaire de cinq mille hommes d'infanterie et de deux mille de cavalerie pendant la guerre qui aurait lieu à l'occasion de son indépendance.

10. Dans le cas où l'Amérique Méridionale serait dans la suite, et après la conclusion de la paix, attaquée par un ennemi quelconque, les États Unis par un article du traité d'alliance défensive à conclure, fournirait le même nombre de troupes de terre stipulé dans l'article précédent. L'équivalent de l'Amérique Méridionale serait représenté par une somme métallique.

11. À l'égard des îles que les Hispano-Américains possèdent dans l'archipel Américain, l'Amérique Méridionale ne doit retenir que celle de Cuba, à cause du port de la Havanne, dont la possession, en raison de sa situation sur le passage du Golfe du Mexique, est indispensable pour sa sûreté, le dit port étant, pour ainsi dire, la porte par laquelle il faut sortir de ce Golfe. À l'égard des îles de Porto Rico, de la Trinité et de la Marguerite, l'Amérique Méridionale ne trouvant dans leur possession aucun intérêt direct, pourrait coopérer à les voir occupées par ses alliés, l'Angleterre et les États Unis d'Amérique, qui en retireraient des avantages des plus considérables.

12. Le passage de l'Isthme de Panama, ainsi que celui du lac de Nicaragua, seraient également garantis pour toutes les marchandises appartenantes aux citoyens des États Unis d'Amérique, et l'exportation de tous les produits de l'Amérique Méridionale serait également encouragée sur leurs vaisseaux de transport. Les Américains du Nord devant devenir pour nous ce que les Hollandois ont long-temps été à l'égard des puissances du Nord, c'est à dire, nos caboteurs.

13. Les opérations militaires sur notre continent Américain, ainsi que les arrangemens à faire à cet égard avec l'Angleterre et les États Unis de l'Amérique à l'occasion des secours que ces puissances nous accorderaient en qualité d'alliés, pour le soutien de notre indépendance, seront confiées, pendant la durée de cette guerre à l'expérience consommée, aux talents et au patriotisme de notre com-

patriote et collègue D. Francisco de Miranda, né à Caracas dans la province de Venezuela; les services importans que depuis quinze ans il a rendus à la cause de l'Indépendance de notre patrie, lui donnant des titres et des droits incontestables à cette charge. Il reçevra à cet égard des instructions plus détaillées, du moment où un corps de troupes debarquera sur le Continent Hispano-Américain, ou que la milice du pays se trouvera, en tout ou en partie, réunie en armes. Nous nous bornerons pour le moment à former le désir de voir commencer les opérations militaires par l'Isthme de Panama et du coté de Santa Fé, tant à cause de l'importance du poste, qu'en raison de l'humeur des peuples disposés au premier signal à s'armer en faveur de l'indépendance de leur patrie. À cet effet il serait encore à désirer qu'une éscadre de huit ou de dix vaisseaux de ligne croisât dans la mer du Sud; autrement il serait à craindre que l'Espagne, entretenant dans ces parages des forces maritimes, ne mît obstacle à toutes nos opérations sur la mer du Sud.

14. Don Joseph del Pozo y Sucre et D. Manuel Joseph de Salas partiront sans délai et conformément à leurs instructions pour Madrid, à l'effet de se rendre auprès de la junta pour rendre compte de leur mission à Paris, et lui remettre un double du présent instrument; la junta n'attendant que le retour de ses deux Commissaires pour se dissoudre aussitôt et se rendre au différents points du Continent Américain où la présence des membres qui le composent est indispensablement nécessaire pour provoquer, lors de l'apparition des secours des alliés, une explosion combinée et générale de la part des peuples de l'Amérique Méridionale.

15. Don Francisco de Miranda et D. Pablo de Olavide sont autorisés à nommer un certain nombre d'agens civils et militaires pour les aider dans leur mission. Mais les emplois qu'ils seraient dans le cas d'accorder, ne seront que provisoires et revocables à volonté, jusqu'à l'instant de la formation du corps représentatif continental, qui seul aura le droit de confirmer ou d'annuler ces grades selon qu'il le jugera convenable.

16. D. Francisco de Miranda et D. Pablo de Olavide sont également autorisés à emprunter, au nom des Colonies Hispano-Américaines, ci-dessus nommées, les sommes d'argent qu'ils croiront nécessaires pour remplir la commission dont ils sont chargés. Ils accorderont les intérêts ordinaires dans de pareils cas, et demeurent responsables de l'emploi des dites sommes, dont ils rendront compte au gouvernement de l'Amérique Méridionale du moment où ils en seront requis.

17. D. Francisco de Miranda et D. Pablo de Olavide sont encore chargés de se procurer en Angleterre dans le plus court délai les objets suivans, savoir;

A. Un train complet d'artillerie de siége composé au moins de soixante pièces de fer bien conditionnées. Cent autres pièces tant d'artillerie légère de bataillons que d'artillerie de position.

B. L'habillement complet pour vingt mille hommes d'infanterie et pour cinq mille hommes de cavalerie avec les accoutremens nécessaires pour les chevaux.

C. Trente mille épées à la Romaine, pour l'infanterie.

D. Dix mille sarises ou piques à la Macédonienne de treize pieds de long.

E. Des tentes en figure conique à la Turque pour le campement de trente mille hommes.

F. Cinquante bons télescopes militaires.

18. Si l'état précaire de sa santé, ou des causes non prévues mettaient D.

Pablo de Olavide dans l'impossibilité de se rendre dans le délai de vingt jours à Paris, pour suivre sa mission à Londres, D. Francisco de Miranda s'y rendrait seul. Il jouirait dans cette position, de la même autorité que s'il était accompagné et aidé des conseils de son collègue. Dans le cas où des circonstances impérieuses réclameraient l'appui d'un collègue, D. Francisco de Miranda est autorisé, s'il le juge convenable pour le bien de la commission dont il est chargé, à associer à ses importantes fonctions son compatriote D. Pedro Caro qui déjà se trouve actuellement employé par lui à Londres dans une mission de confiance, ou toute autre personne de la probité et des talents de laquelle il puisse répondre. Et *vice versa*, si par un effet du régime révolutionnaire en France, ou par manque de santé, D. Francisco de Miranda était empêché de se rendre à Londres, D. Pablo de Olavide aurait également le droit de suivre seul cette importante commission, et de s'associer un collègue s'il le jugeait convenable.

Nous, D. Francisco de Miranda, D. Joseph del Pozo y Sucre, et D. Manuel Joseph de Salas, Commissaires de la junta des députés des villes et provinces de l'Amérique Méridionale après un mûr examen des Articles cidessus, déclarons que les dits articles doivent servir de pouvoirs et d'instructions à nos commissaires envoyés à Londres, et au besoin à Philadelphia, D. Francisco de Miranda et Don Pablo de Olavide, voulant que les présentes suppléent à tout autre instrument en forme, que la situation tyrannique sous laquelle la France gémit aujourd'hui, nous a empêché de leur transmettre; les ayant compôsés, pour la facilité des négociations, en langue française, et ayant pris une copie traduite en langue espagnole collationnée et signée par nous pour être remise à la junta à Madrid.

Telles sont les seules démarches que les circonstances actuelles nous ont permis de faire, vu que notre principal agent et notre compatriote D. Francisco de Miranda est obligé de vivre dans une profonde retraite pour se soustraire à la proscription qui frappe aujourd'hui tous les citoyens distingués par leurs vertus et leurs talents; proscription qui seule est la cause des délais et des difficultés infinies que nous avons eu à vaincre.

Fait à Paris le 22 Décembre, 1797.

(L. S.) Josef del Pozo y Sucre.
(L. S.) Manuel Josef de Salas.
(L. S.) Francisco de Miranda.
Duperou,
Secrétaire.

Conforme à l'original,
F. de Miranda.

END OF VOLUME I.

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